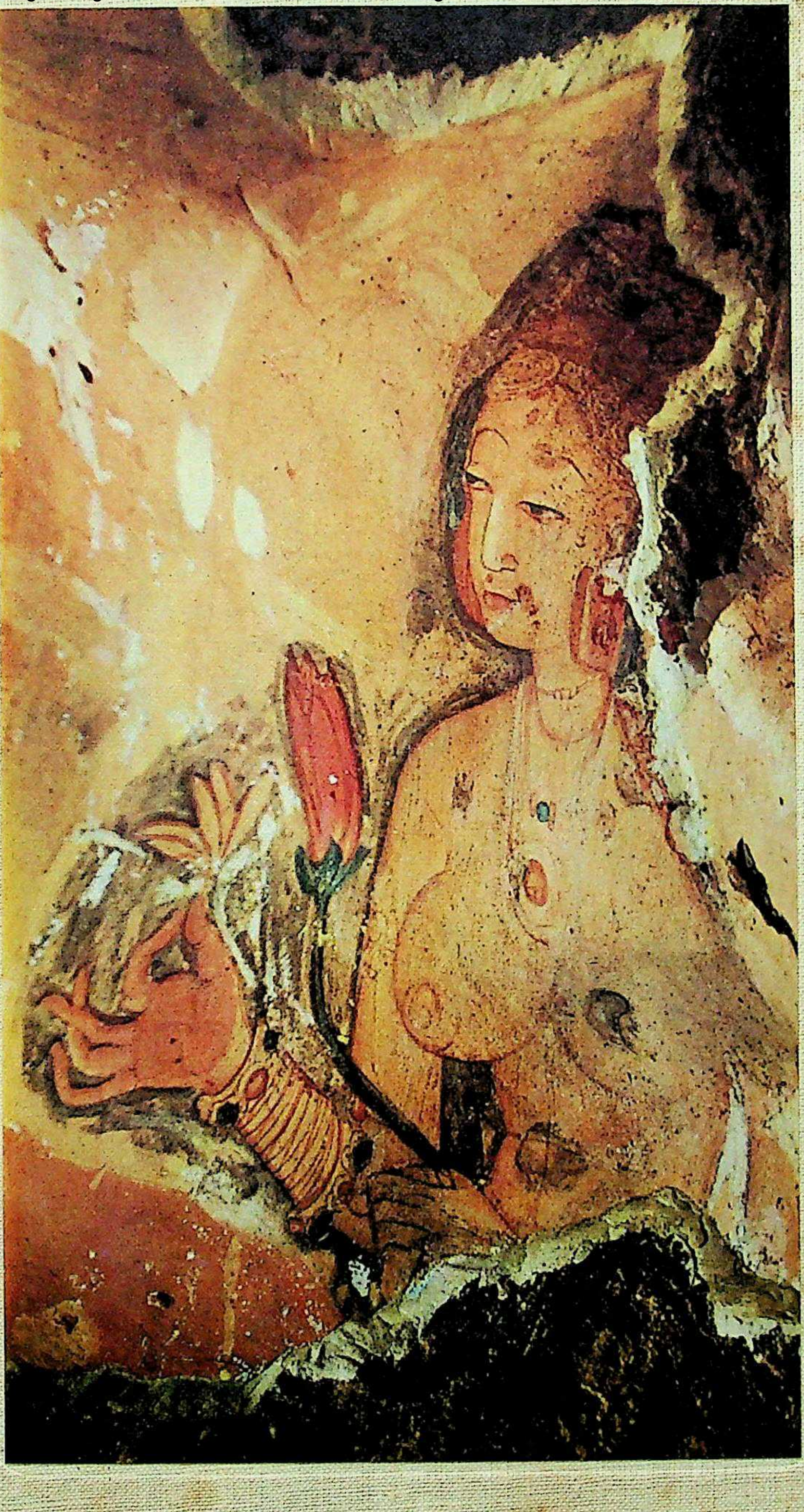
PHILIP S. RAWSON



INDIAN PAINTING

PIERRE TISNÉ

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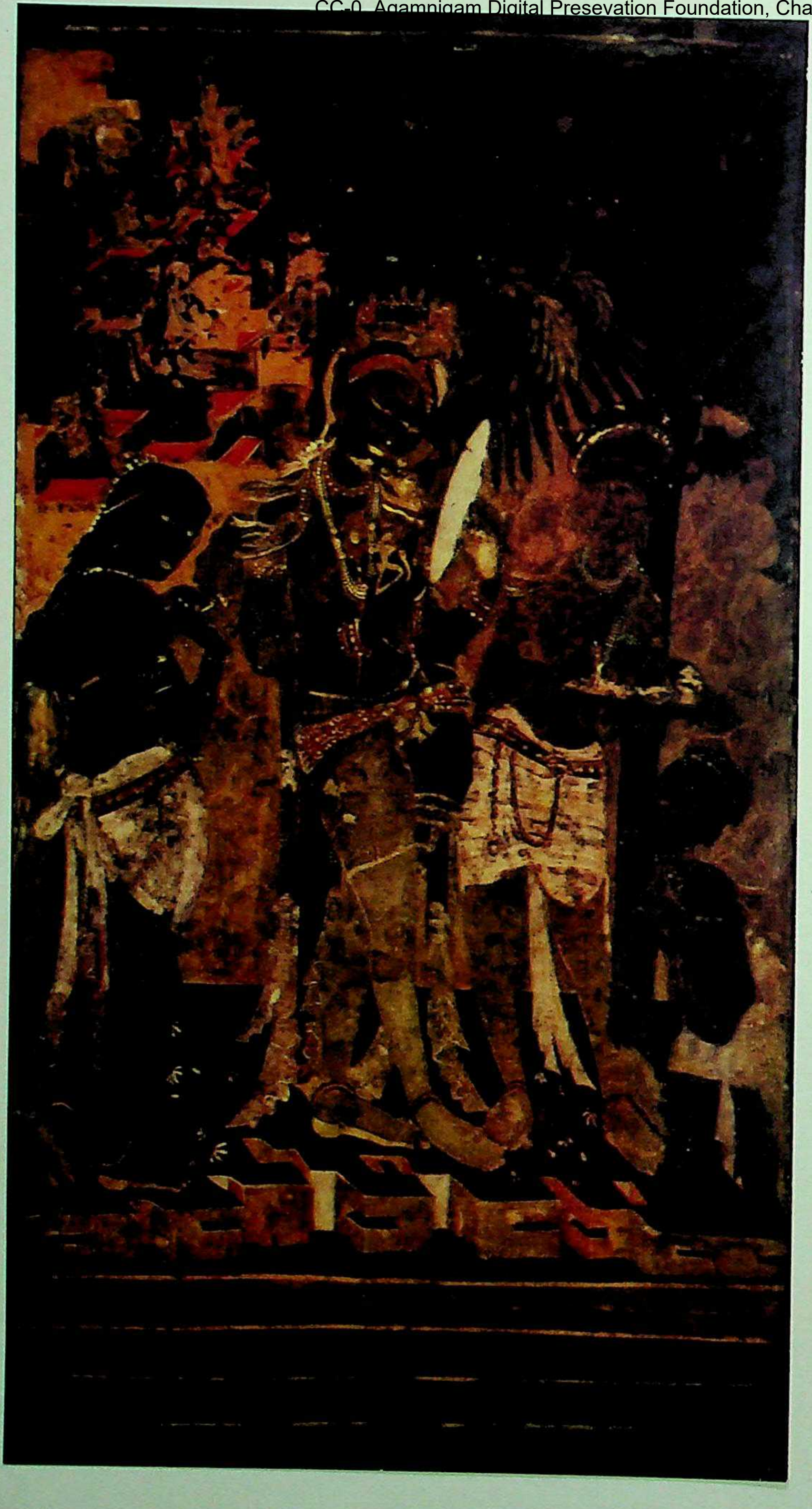
I am all too vividly aware of what I have had to leave out of this book. Modern Indian painting, now a most healthy and flourishing art, lies beyond my present scope, and demands a book to itself. 19th century painters like Ravi Varma belong to the history of modern art. I have been obliged to curtail my discussion of — and even ignore — chronological questions which are still matters of bitter contention. I have also been obliged to give interpretations of history without arguing them. There are three major traditions of painting owing their origin to Indian prototypes that I have only been able briefly to mention. They are the Central Asian ; the Burmese tradition of Pagan ; and the Tibetan.

I have thought it best not to encumber the text with footnotes. There is a bibliography with comments for each chapter which will help anyone who wishes to look further into this art.



A TOILETTE SCENE
AJANTA — CAVE XVII
MID VIth CENT.

INTRODUCTION

THE vast sub-continent of India is bounded by sea to the south, and by mountains to the north. Generally speaking the mountains have formed a barrier that has isolated India from the outside world as effectively as the sea. Here and there, however, there are passes through which tides of invasion and rivers of trade have flowed. Far and away the most important of these is the Khyber Pass, in the extreme north-west, which follows roughly the course of the Kabul river out of Afghanistan down to the upper reaches of the Indus river. Through this loophole countless waves of invading immigrants have surged—Aryans, Greeks, Scythians, Huns and Turks. And endlessly, the plodding camel caravans have carried in the trade of Asia from China, Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Mediterranean, linking India with all these places in the cultural sense.

Inside India it is the rivers that dominate both geography and life, in the north especially the great Ganges with its tributaries, the Yamuna and the Brahmaputra. These rivers, fed by the melting snows of the Himalayas, and the torrential monsoon rains, are not like any rivers we know in the West. Not even the Mississipi behaves quite as they do. Vast as the sea, capriciously changing their courses sometimes by hundreds of miles almost overnight, drowning thousands of people and turning flat country into an endless lake with their monsoon floods, visible manifestations of the profound forces of Nature, they yet nourish the parched lands through which they flow. Human beings by means of their puny irrigation systems can draw from them the blessing of water to support themselves under the pitiless Indian sun, which blisters and burns the countryside to a sandy brown uniformity nine months of the year.

The two chief river systems, the Indus, and the Ganges-Yamuna, have between them nourished the greatest Indian civilisations. In the third and second millennia B. C. the Indus was the cradle of a civilisation in many ways similar to that of contemporary Mesopotamia. Later, during the Christian era, the banks of the holy river Ganges recognised in India as the earthly counterpart of the celestial Milky Way supported a series of splendid dynasties and cultures for more than two thousand years. The rivers too have always provided the easiest means of transport for goods in bulk, and for armies.

In the South, the uplands of the Deccan and the Tamil plains have their own river systems. The Krishna, Mahanadi and Godavari are forbidding waterways. But they have their sanctity. In the further south the people rely for their water chiefly on great reservoirs, "tanks", constructed of masonry and earth, which preserve enough monsoon water for the whole year's needs. Needless to say, even in the north there are vast areas of countryside which lie beyond the reach of the rivers, and it has always been one of the most urgent public necessities that tanks be built, irrigation ditches dug, and kept in good repair. Kings left them as memorials to their own good works, increased their merit and expiated sins thereby. For wherever there was a river to be tapped, or a well-made tank, there the fertility of the land could be increased tenfold.

Over the whole face of India, however, even where the land seems most inhospitable, there are villages. Where a spring existed or a well could be sunk, a village could grow. Where the gracious rivers flowed, or where royal bounty had ordained that grand tanks be made, so that the countryside could produce food enough for itself and more besides, a town arose. At the most favoured spot of all, a city. Water was the supreme treasure, the sap of life. And it is not surprising that the most ancient deities of India, still widely revered, are the Nagas, the wonderful many-headed snakes who are the patrons and guardians of wells and ponds, and of buried treasure. They populate India's art in their thousands.

We must not forget those other ancient popular gods of India, the Yakshas and Yakshis, the tree dryads. Today India's great forests are sadly depleted, and are confined to the most mountainous terrain. But once, during much of the period covered in this book, they were far more extensive. Today the vast plains of India are dotted with sparse clumps and coppices, the uplands screened in scrub. But at the beginning of the Christian era dense forests of towering trees carpeted three-quarters of the countryside. These millions of trees have been literally used up, and never replaced. They were used for fuel, for making houses, boats, furniture and tools. And almost all that was made from them over the centuries has vanished completely, devoured without trace by time and India's devastating climate.

Across the whole of the sub-continent runs, and has run since the beginning of history, a network of roads, tracks and forest paths linking city to city, town to city, and village to country town. Along these roads in their thousands move and have always moved on foot and in bullock carts, the peasants to market, the traders, wandering ascetics and the pilgrims. Even today, at least once in his life, every Hindu hopes to visit the shores of Holy Mother Ganges to bathe in her waters. Best of all would be to die on her bank and have his ashes borne away on her current. Hindus, Buddhists and Jains, Moslems too, have travelled continuously on pilgrimage to hundreds of shrines and sacred places scattered in every part of India. On their journeys they could expect hospitality from their own class; and so despite the vast distances separating the corners of this enormous country, despite the many different and mutually incomprehensible languages her people spoke, an extraordinary cultural unity prevailed. Sanskrit, the literary lingua franca, also played its part in shaping this unity, as we shall see.

Life in the villages of India has always been hard. The household water supply may be two miles away. Food may be poor and scarce, the labour in the fields back-breaking and unrewarding. Above all, in his village, the Indian has lived with fear and death constantly at his elbow. Most of the year his land is baked, parched by a pitiless sun that saps his vitality. A haze of dust fills the air, bleaching all colour from the landscape. The snake waits for him or his wife on the footpath, the tiger or leopard in the dark; pestilence—typhus, cholera or small pox—makes its annual visitation. Malaria and a hundred other debilitating and painful diseases and parasites are endemic. Five or six out of every ten children may die. Then, once on twice in a generation, the rains fail and the corpses lie unburied in abandoned villages and along the roads in their tens of thousands. Affliction of this kind makes no distinction between rich and poor. Proud kings, cruel lords, the pitiless moneylender, and the tax collector turn their screws. Bogeys and Rakshasas make the night; a spiteful witch, or a bearer of the evil-eye may blast the casual walker in the street. Everyone is bound firmly into the social status to hich he was born, which prescribes his life-time's occupation, and imposes on him a formidable array of duties of service. Since about 300 A. D. the iron rules of the caste system hemmed him in. There has been nothing to do but endure.

It is terribly revealing that at the outset of every philosophical disquisition, Samkhya, Buddhist or Vedanta, it is an axiom, taken for granted, that "everything is suffering". The Universe is nothing but suffering, existence itself is suffering. The urgent goal of every Indian religious system is escape, release, "mukti". And almost without exception Indian religious systems teach that contingent reality, the world, is ultimately worthless and unreal. Against this background of experience it is hardly surprising that the creative imagination of the Indians has been obsessed continually with images of abundance and royal ease. The hero of story is usually a king or a god. Art represents only paragons of beauty and delight, plump and kindly, unmarked by suffering and grief, taking their ease in palaces and flowering landscapes. In the whole of Indian visual art there are no compassionate images of suffering. It is only the sensuous beauty of grieving figures that we are shown. Ascetics sometimes exhibit with pride their emaciated frames; images of the disease godesses Chamunda and Sitala, and Kali the destroyer, are horrible precisely because their bodies betray the ravages of starvation and disease. Only in Moghul painting is the appearance of suffering sometimes the subject of interested but scarcely compassionate scrutiny. In this, perhaps Indian art is not unique. And of course it would be entirely foolish to blame Indian art for not doing what it never set out to do. But westerners may well find the Indian artist's constant images of beauty and delight lacking in a certain type of pathos they have come to expect of the highest artistic expression.

All this, of course, must not be crudely and mistakenly interpreted as meaning that compassion for suffering is foreign to Indian life. In fact the opposite is true. But the realm of art is not life. It is not even life seen at its best, life beautified. Indian art moves in another region of being, the heavens of the imagination. Indeed a profound and instinctive belief in the existence of supramundane heavens, of terrace upon cloudy terrace of palaces and gardens, inhabited by beings of unearthly beauty, has always been one of the most fundamental elements in India folklore and legend. Philosophy and religion have had to take them seriously into account, though they may go rather against the grain. They are, however, the very stuff of art.

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In every sphere of human activity Indian life is dominated by an all-important principle which has a profound bearing upon art. This is a deeply ingrained belief that only the abstract and general pattern or concept is in any sense real and of value. This belief, comparable in some ways with the Platonic theory of ideas, could be called the germ from which almost the whole of Indian culture has sprouted. Philosophy sees the individual event simply as an insignificant instance of a general type; theology speaks of the life of man as a mere ripple on the vast timeless ocean of eternal being. Change and individuality are held to be unreal, without significance or value. Against the vast vistas of time that revealed themselves to the speculative imagination of Indian thinkers, with their endlessly self-repeating aeons and universes numberless as the sands of the Ganges, the particular instance, event or person, must ultimately be meaningless.

In the social and moral sphere the belief in "reincarnation" degraded the value of the individual and his personal acts. With a virtually endless series of existences to look forward to, and a series of past lives stretching out behind him into the unplumbed abysses of the remotest past, need we wonder that to the Indian the events of this present life look trivial in the extreme? So deeply rooted has this conception been that it was far from uncommon for a man afflicted in some way to perform a drastic self-immolation or self-mutilation in order to purchase better conditions in his next existence. An impotent man, for example, would castrate himself in order to avoid impotence "next time".

These conditions of belief both reflected and influenced the character of society. Relations between man and man, and man and woman, were and still are largely formal, depending primarily on status by birth. And this means caste. Although in the more remote past caste status was a little more elastic than it became more recently—now of course caste snobbery is outlawed, though far from dead—the fundamental assumption behind the caste system was that a man was born into the place in society he deserved on the strength of his past lives. Thus, in a very important sense a man as one might meet him on the street, *in propia persona*, Brahmin on despised sweeper, was not an individual in the Western sense; he was a neutral existence in a particular phase, a walking image of his status. He was blessed or unfortunate according to his deserts.

"According to his deserts"; this means according to the merits of his conduct in past lives. Here is the basis of old Indian morality. "Karma", a man's action "good" or "bad" in past lives, determines his fortune in this life. But against the Indian background there is no implication in this opposition between "good" and "bad" of personal decision, of free will, of the agonised struggle of personal conscience and the sense of guilt that the concept of morality implies in the West. One of India's greatest and most famous sacred texts, the Bhagavad Gita, the "Song of the Lord", is devoted to pointing out that the only kind of "goodness" which has any value is conformity, keeping exactly the accepted regulations of one's place in society, even to fighting and killing one's nearest and dearest if that becomes one's duty. For, of course, the accepted regulations for one's life, laid down in a general social sense by one's caste and its local council, in a personal sense by custom, orthodoxy and law, are held to be of divine ordination, beyond criticism, beyond question. They embody the abstract norm, the general pattern which is the only "real" in the social sphere. Change is unreal, time self-repeating, and in the context of eternity both are meaningless. Everything that happens has happened before, and will happen again. There is no such thing as the unrepeatable moment of choice, the once-for-ever decision. Until the final moment of his release a man must remain in absolute bondage to the endlessly turning wheel of existence.

This outlook can obviously be a great moral comfort. The Westerner's agonies of personal choice and responsibility do not arise. Duty and custom take care of every problem. But there have been in the past and there are today in India people who consider that this kind of moral comfort ends in fact in crippling complacency. Buddhists, Charvakas, some Vaishnavas in antiquity, Ram Mohun Roy and Gandhi in modern times have sought another way. The search still goes on.

In this connection it is an interesting and significant fact that the writing of history, so much cultivated in the West, by Islam, in China and Japan, was only rarely undertaken in India. Genealogy was generally sufficient to satisfy dynastic pride. For an accurate knowledge of her own past, India has had to wait for the application of western methods of scholarship and history.

The bearing of this whole deeply ingrained attitude of mind on art should be apparent. In native Indian art one should not look for individualism of portraiture. Only in that painting executed under the direct influence of the Moghuls and their foreign exemplars does portraiture appear. The people in Indian art are types, and are represented according to strict canons of proportion. Their visible characteristics are marks of their status, which is most often divine. In fact theWestern art which Indian art most resembles is the art of fashion-advertising and the "pin-up". Certainly those volatile changes of type and style to which Western chic is subject did not take place so swiftly in Indian art. But the basis is the same, the cultivation of a conventionalised ideal. In India this ideal has been given, like all of India's great norms, the attributes of sanctity, permanence and immutability. "Perfection" of physical form marks out the god. Text books surviving from mediaeval times make this abundantly clear. And the great attention paid in Indian art to details of hairdressing and jewellery—all marks of status—reinforce the comparison.

Purely from the point of view of representation Indian art is "theatrical". Its effects depend almost entirely upon human figures which express by their rationalised postures and gestures both the facts of the narrative forming the subject of the picture, and the quality of their own feelings. It is not quite correct to say —as has sometimes been said—that Indian art represents Indian dancing. The latter, as we know it today, embodies rather rigid traditions that have grown up alongside the traditions of visual art, and influence must have been mutual. But the drama has been a magnificent and profoundly studied institution in India since ancient times, and the Indian conception of dramatic mime goes far beyond anything yet known in the West in its searching analysis and its clear understanding of its own methods.

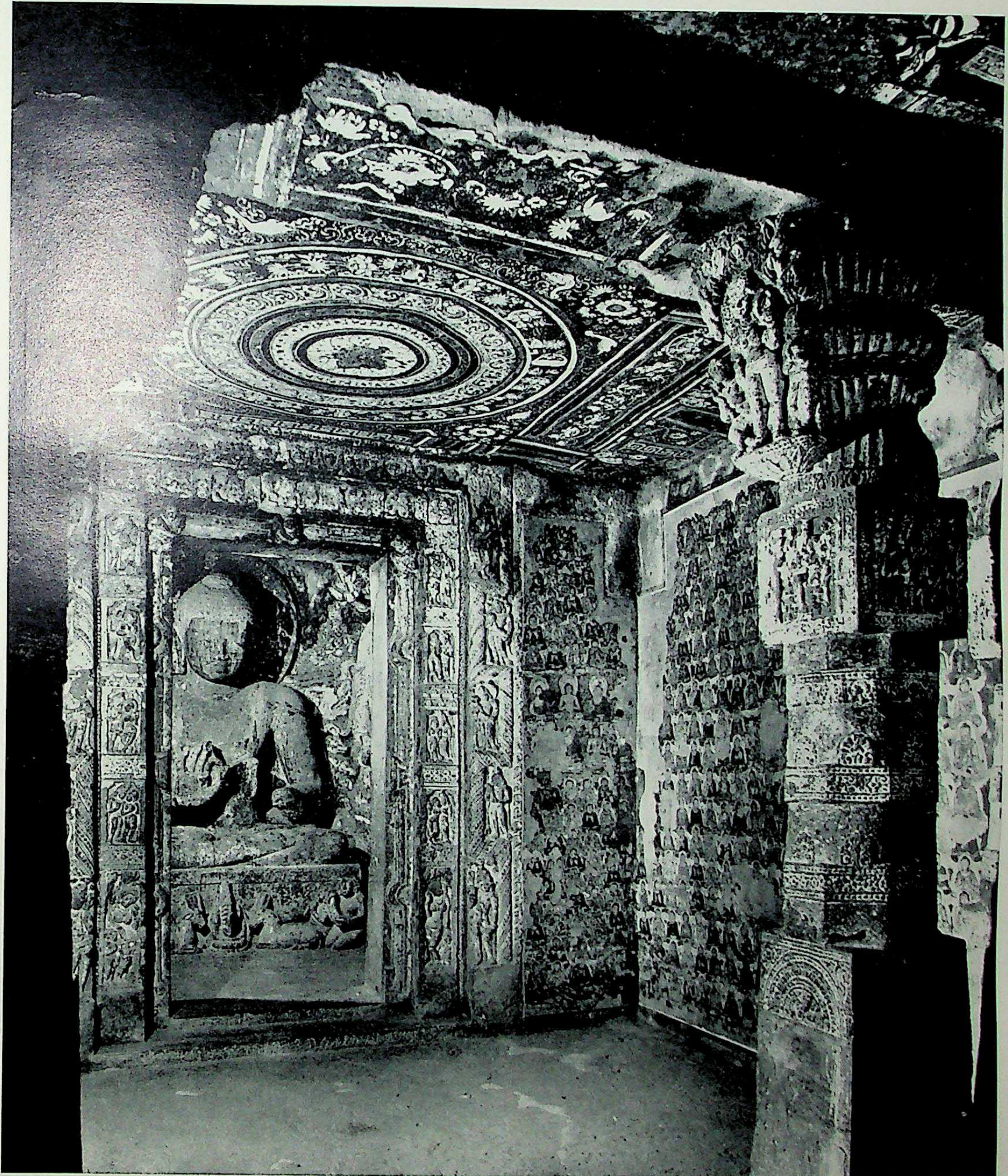
Since the expressive qualities of the human body, both through its forms and its demonstrative actions, are so essential an ingredient in their visual art, the

Indians tended to treat clothing as if it scarcely existed. In most of the wall paintings of pre-Moslem epochs the figures, like the figures in the related sculpture, are treated as jewelled nudes across whose bodies float summary indications of garments. There may, however, be another contributory reason for this custom. Indian weavers prided themselves on their ability to produce the most fantastically light, almost transparent cotton fabrics. Legend has it that a young princess wearing seven robes of this fine cotton was reproved by her father for appearing at court indecently dressed. Of course such fine cottons were the most expensive. And since fineness of one's garments would thus be another mark of status, the gods, heroes and legendary beings of art would be expected to wear only the finest clothes.

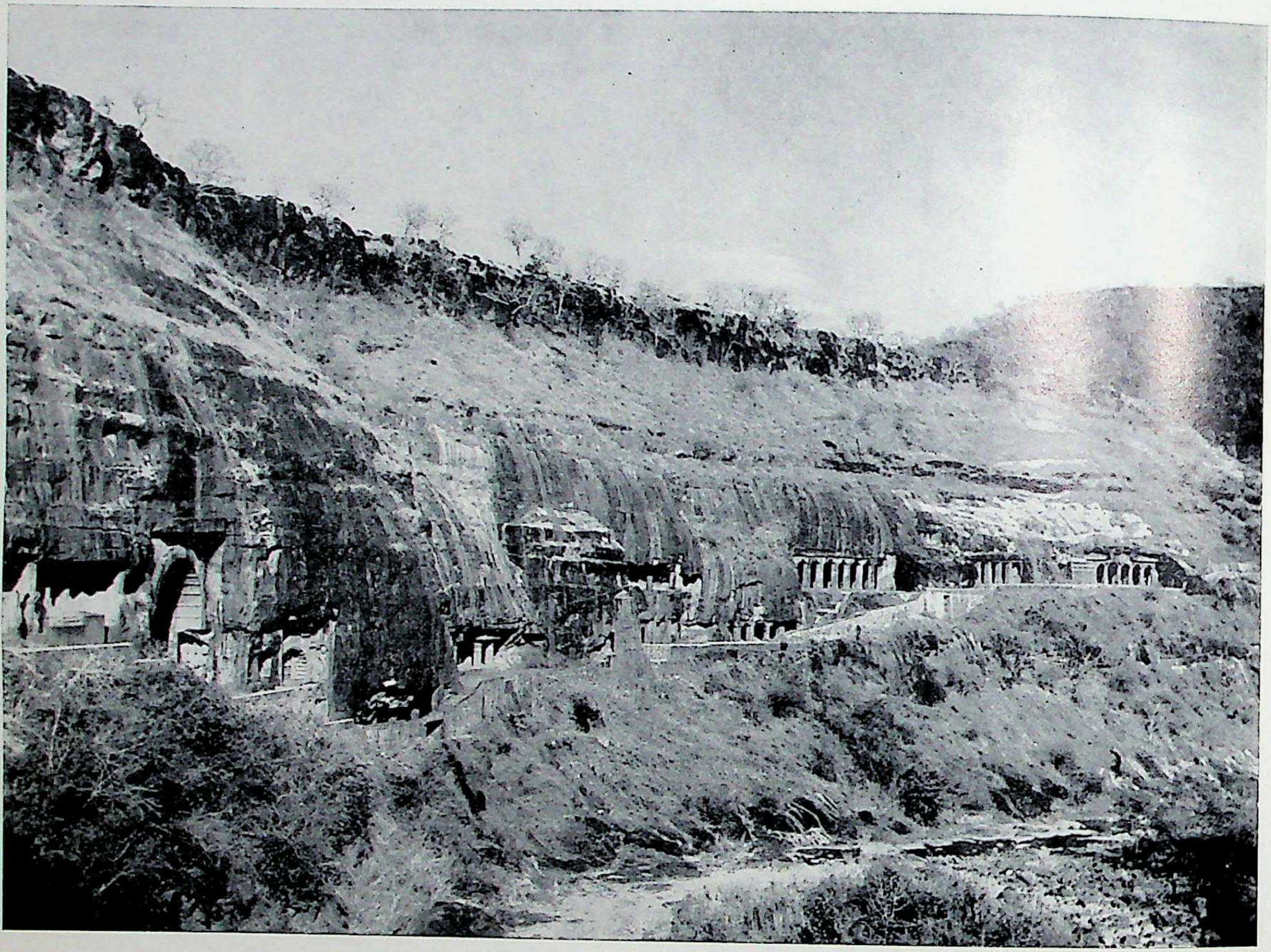
There can be no denying the fact that Indian art, drama and music no less than painting, has always set out in some sense to please. "Psychological analysis" in the western sense, with its deliberate horrors and calculated discomforts, has never been acceptable in India. Life has had too many pressing horrors and discomforts of its own. In a sense the Indian attitude is "escapist". But it is escapist on the grandest possible scale. The "release" which is the goal of the highest Indian spiritual effort is the final escape. But it is escape through an ultimate recognition of unity. Art at lower levels offers a little, temporary release into a sensuous paradise, and at higher levels works magically towards the greater release.

Looking at the problem from another point of view, one can say that underlying Indian art was always the intention to *adorn*. The very idea of ornament is foreign to the modern world. Our functional architecture has banished ornament as useless, inexpressive and expensive. Ornament has come to play a subservient role in western homes, and western chic demands that personal ornament be sparse and restrained. Not so in ancient India. Personal ornament was always very important and still is even among the poorest people. Men and women wore strings of beads, shells, jewels, flowers or metal trinkets round their necks, waists, hips, ankles, arms, in nose and ears, and bound among their hair. They loved the brilliantly dyed and patterned cloths which were one of India's greatest glories. The custom of hanging garlands of flowers round the necks of distinguished visitors still followed in India was even more prevalent in ancient times. Shrines and sacred trees were honoured in the same way. They too were hung with garlands, with rich cloths and strings of jewels. The architectural ornament which blossomed everywhere on the fabric of medieval Indian caves and temples reflects this custom, for its basic patterns all go back to the flower-garland, the jewel-string and the hanging cloth.

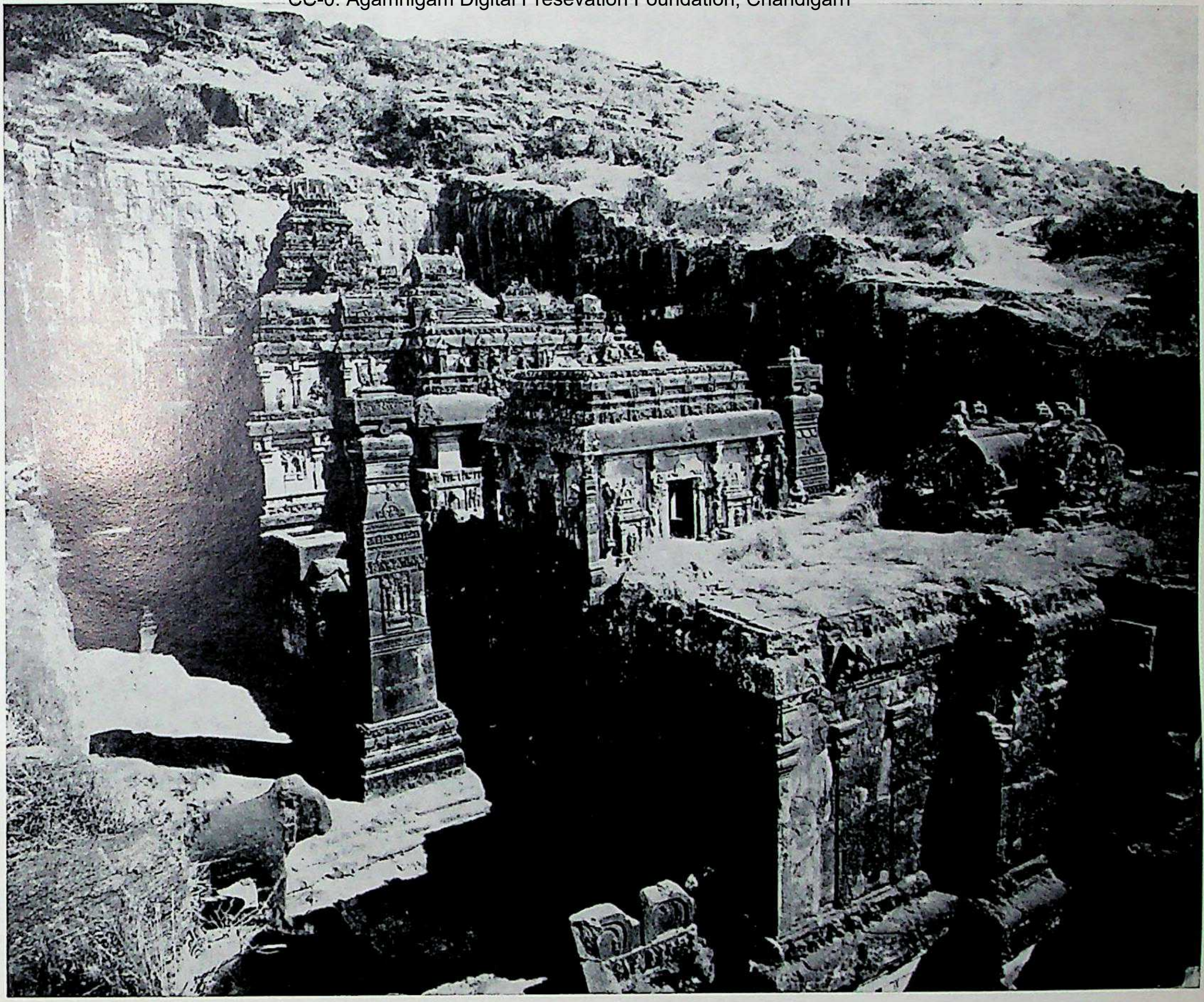
This attitude towards ornament reflects an instinct deeply rooted in the Indian character. Indians have a great capacity for reverence, and this instinct demands that they express their feelings of reverence in acts. Time and again we shall meet this expression of respect through ornamental painting. But ornament, even the patterns on clothing worn on the body, has other functions too. It is meant to produce magical effects, by acting as a charm or as a prophylactic against evil influences; thus it incorporates a power of some kind. At a later stage of development it not only expresses but *provides* "status", as the lavish jewellery of gods does in South Indian art. Visual art, even purely representational art, fulfils both these functions of ornament vis-à-vis the house, temple or manuscript it adorns.



AJANTA — CAVE II — INNER SHRINE (*Photo Eliot Elisofon.*)



AJANTA — VIEW FROM THE WESTERN END OF THE CRESCENT — CAVE I AT THE EXTREME *(Photo Eliot Elisofon)*



ELLORA — PANORAMA *(Photo Musée Guimet.)*

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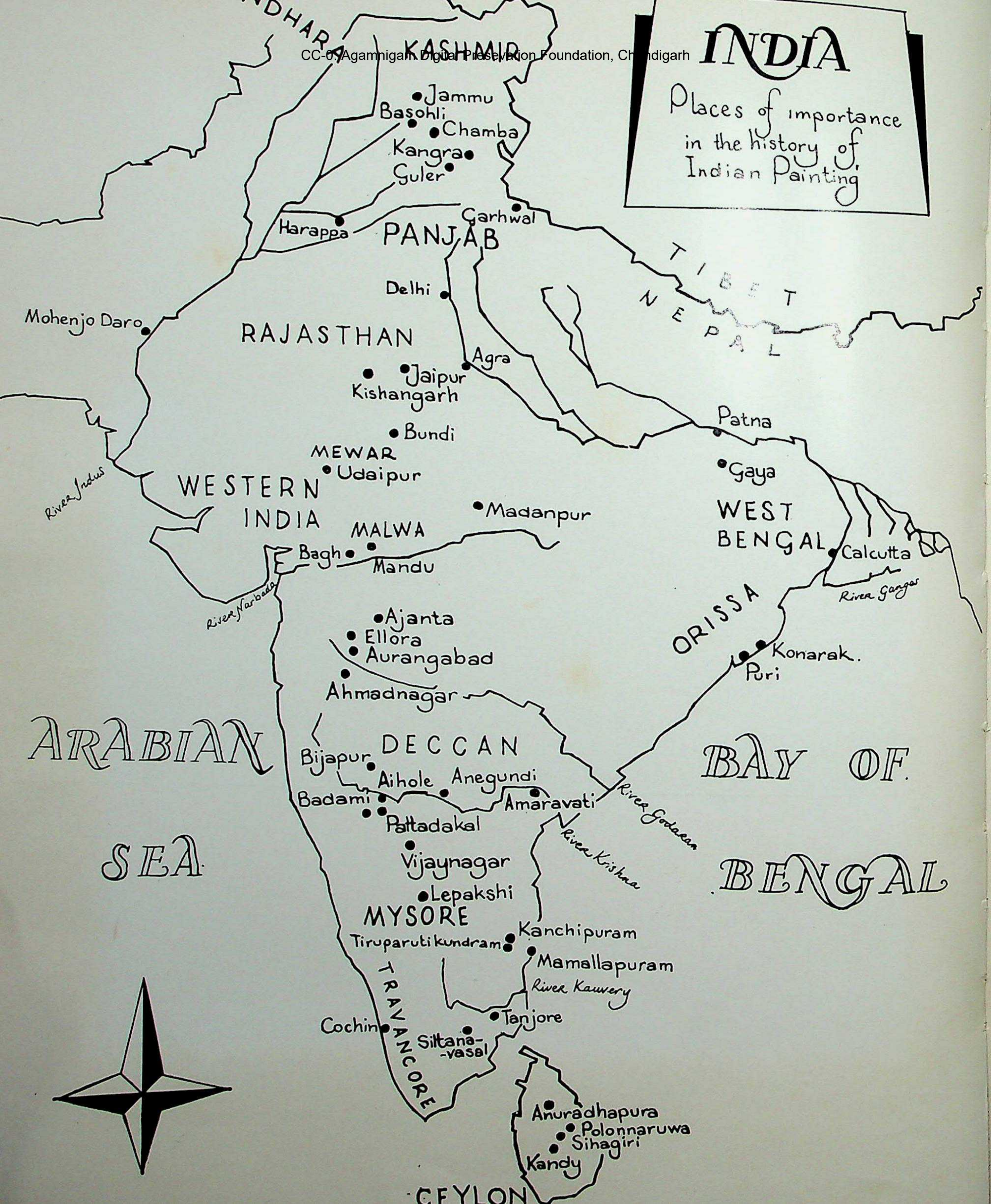


INDIA

Places of importance in the history of Indian Painting

NDHARA
KASHMIR
Jammu
Basohli
Chamba
Kangra
Guler
Garhwal
Harappa
PANJAB
TIBET
NEPAL
Delhi
Mohenjo Daro
RAJASTHAN
Agra
Jaipur
Kishangarh
Bundi
MEWAR
Udaipur
River Indus
WESTERN INDIA
Patna
Gaya
Madanpur
WEST BENGAL
Calcutta
River Ganges
MALWA
Bagh
Mandu
River Narbada
ORISSA
Ajanta
Ellora
Aurangabad
Ahmadnagar
Konarak.
Puri
ARABIAN SEA
DECCAN
Bijapur
Aihole
Anegundi
Badami
Amaravati
Pattadakal
River Godavari
River Krishna
Vijaynagar
Lepakshi
MYSORE
BAY OF BENGAL
Kanchipuram
Tiruparutikundram
Mamallapuram
River Kauvery
TRAVANCORE
Cochin
Tanjore
Sittana-vasal
Anuradhapura
Polonnaruwa
Sihagiri
Kandy
CEYLON

It is a natural consequence of the Indian aversion from contingent reality and emphasis on the ideal that the painters of India have never concerned themselves with analysing the structure of visual reality as Western artists have. Since the Renaissance the latter, partly in accordance with the demands of the Christian religion with its insistence upon the historical "actuality" of its dramatis personae, have held, generally speaking, a belief that "external reality" can provide both a stimulus to art, and a criterion for judging it. This belief culminated in the painstaking visual analysis of Cezanne, and is even implicit, as a proposition to be rejected, in the art of abstraction and abstract expressionism. Western artists like Blake or Moreau, who attempted to run counter to this belief, have always been obliged, for lack of support from any tradition, to resort to routine and second-hand analyses of reality as a foundation for their art.

Exotic art of all kinds has taken quite another line. Indian painters in particular have concerned themselves with finding symbols not for "optical sensations" but for interior states of feeling which have been valued for their own sake. Certainly, since painting is a visual art, these symbols must operate through the eyes, and spread their roots in visual experience. But it is always internal realities with which they are concerned, not external.

A simple and striking example will show what is meant here. The saints of the Jaina faith, by reducing their consumption of food and limiting their movements ever more strictly, carry out the ideal of "ahimsa" to the uttermost limit. Ultimately, their own death by sheer inanition brings them to the condition of pure non-injury. Jaina art often represents these saints with creepers growing up round their legs and hands, to indicate how rigorously they have kept themselves from moving. But the art-made figures show externally no trace of their privations. They do not appear emaciated or worn; there are no hollows where flesh has sunk away. They wear the ideal, heroically rounded forms of perfect manhood, which reveal their spiritual, not their physical nature.

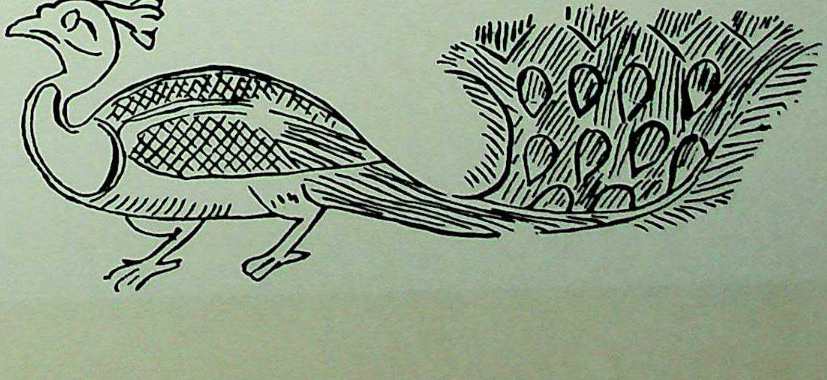
In a similar way Indian painting represents its types as they are in themselves, not just as they look. Or rather, in their special aspect which is intelligible within the realm of meaning they inhabit. What those realms of meaning are this book will try to reveal. For the present it is sufficient to indicate that Indian art contains only visual ideas which have in the course of centuries acquired a special aura of significance through being constantly employed in the figures of daily and poetical speech. Even the subdivision of the human body corresponds with verbal terminology.

One characteristic of Indian painting will be immediately apparent. The areas of its surfaces are always grasped as simple enclosures. One part does not begin until another has ended. There is no articulation of many aspects of form into complex systems whose parts are left unresolved. To some extent this is the same as saying that analysis of a visual "reality" has not been India's concern. For the Western analytic approach must result in progressively more complex conceptual systems involving a multitude of overlapping and interrelated class-systems. To the Indians it has always been of paramount importance that single comprehensive ideas—visual or purely intellectual—should be stated clearly and directly. Needless to say, the production of such comprehensive ideas is not easy, as some modern Western artists who have attempted to rediscover this faculty of "primitive" artists have learned to their cost. The pitfall of vapid geometry has claimed them. Indian artists, however, have been able to rely on a steadily developing tradition to support their formal generalisations, and if their range of ideas has been narrow, it has certainly been profoundly considered.

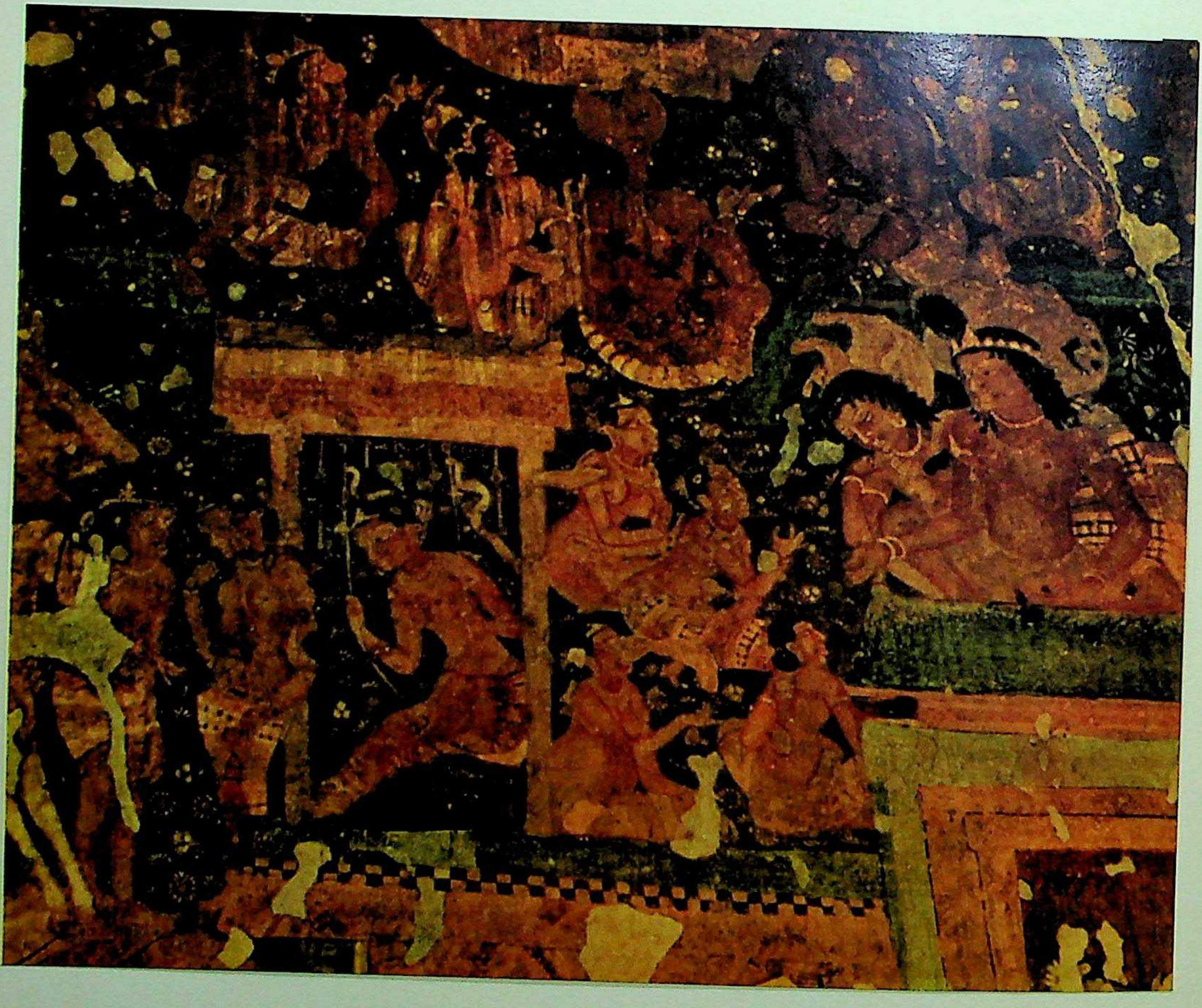
If such an art based on simple ideas is to be successful those ideas themselves must be of a highly suggestive nature, and carry overtones of significance that are immediately recognisable by the painter's public; recognisable not only at the conscious level, but at the unconscious. The appeal of the simple but subtle forms produced, say, by the carvers of the magnificent and fantastic Dogon masks lies not in any likeness to external reality they achieve, nor in the strictness of their geometrical analysis, but in the background of remembered and emotionally coloured experience their forms evoke, severally and in combination. Just so in Indian painting, though its figures do have many "natural" attributes, the coloured areas and their enclosing contours each and all must evoke their proper emotive backgrounds.

A musical analogy can illuminate this idea. Most of the biggest and best developed stringed musical instruments of India, the true Vina and the big Sitar, the Sarod and the Sarangi, have as well as their melodic and drone strings, a large set of smaller strings lying beneath which are never actually struck, but are expected to resonate in sympathy with the notes sounded on the strings above them. This system provides an excellent image for the process of artistic appreciation, as it has been conceived and extensively discussed by Indian aesthetic theorists. The melody of the playing strings, like the overt subject matter of the painting, is followed with the conscious mind, while from the unconscious there rises a continuous sympathetic resonance provided by relevant memories from its store of emotively charged experience. As the conscious elements change, so different regions of sympathetic resonance are set in motion. The skilful artist manipulates not only the conscious material, but through it, the unconscious, thus provoking deep-seated states of emotion. It is interesting that some Indian aesthetic theorists have recognised such states of aesthetic exaltation as legitimate meas of "release".

There is another way in which a musical parallel can help in understanding Indian painting. Indian music is essentially modal and monodic. It has no harmony or use of key. Its expressive invention is purely melodic, developed in a single extended line, which is punctuated by rhythmic patterns, and divided by convention into sections of various lengths. Indian visual thought is also linear at bottom. The phrasing of the lines in any Indian picture carries the weight of the invention. Tonal modelling, as we shall see, is a function of the inflected lines; but even where modelling is not used the space-enclosures the lines make are not dead, geometrical concepts. The life of their contours gives them vital suggestions of their own; and visual colour, like instrumental tone-colour, works as an accompaniment to the continuously moving line of the melodic invention.



A PALACE SCENE — AJANTA — CAVE II — CA. 600



PREHISTORY

3000 B. C. - 1.500 B. C.

It is a fair assumption that, from the earliest times, the Indians have always produced some sort of painting. Among them the love of colour and pattern is so deeply ingrained that one cannot believe they did not produce some sort of pictorial art, even during those periods of their history for which we have no direct evidence.

The oldest examples of Indian painting that we know occur on the pottery that comes from the bronze age settlement sites of Baluchistan, and from the great bronze age cities of the Indus Valley civilisation. Most of it belongs to the third and early second millenium B. C., and reflects the interests of bronze-age society. Figures of cattle, longhorned moufflon, peacocks and fish appear, as well as elaborate patterned ornament, painted sometimes in as many as five colours. Much of its thematic material is based on religious ideas that were familiar in Western Asia at about the same time, such as the bull-cult and, more specifically, that same mystical connection between bull-sacrifice and the fertility of the earth which lies behind the cults of Dionysos and Mithras. It is no accident that the bull-masked dancer is a familiar figure among the seals and terracottas of the Indus Valley cities. He is the alter ego of Dionysos himself, and a clear, if distant, relative of the masked dancers in the palaeolithic cave paintings of Europe. On the other hand he is the remote ancestor of one of the most familiar images of Siva, the god whose vehicle is the bull, in mediaeval India, Nata raja, the lord of the dance.

The figures on the bronze age pottery are schematically executed, and resemble very much the pottery ornament of ancient Mesopotamia; occasionally even the geometric style of pre-classical Greece. But the Indian designs had one most interesting development. Their symbols are examples of what must have been a steadily evolving language of pictographs which served at the same time as the basis of a written script, very much as did the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt and Chou China. This script, which was used on the seals of the Indus Valley civilisation, has not yet been diciphered, but it is full of signs whose ancestry is obvious.

The vast ruins of the Indus Valley cities themselves, most surprisingly, yielded not a single scrap of painting apart from pottery. It would seem that the thousands of buildings—palaces, houses, citadels, baths and granaries alike—were destitute of any kind of ornament. Nothing in any way resembling the colour inlays of Mesopotamia or the frescos of Crete was found. And yet one cannot help believing that painting was a living art. Nothing made in perishable materials has survived; and if painting was done, for example, on wood or cloth, it would not have come down to us. The magnificent foliate patterns, the birds and animals and the occasional "genre" scenes, representing, say, a fisherman with his nets, painted on some of the pots, strongly suggest that pottery-ornament was only one manifestation of a far wider concern with coloured form. Terracotta figurines show traces of pigment indicating details of their shapes; we know that patterned cotton garments were worn. And the designs on some of the intaglio stamp-seals illustrating scenes of worship, bull-vaulting or animal sacrifice show a highly developed concern with pictorial space, as distinct from the mere juxtaposition of signs. One can hardly imagine that such a skill was evolved solely on the minute scale of the seal-cutter's craft.

The Indus Valley civilisation was overwhelmed about 1500 years before the birth of Christ. For more than a millennium after that the art of India disappears from our sight. Then during the third century B. C., there were made sculptures in stone which are the earliest surviving works of art proper belonging to India's historical period. The oldest fragments of Indian painting that we know are three centuries later still.

This great gap in our knowledge of India's art cannot be filled. However, we can learn something by reference to some of her old literature belonging to the few centuries before and after the birth of Christ. There are numerous and precise references to painting as a living art in ancient times in India, and in Ceylon as well. It was executed in gum-bound colours on plaster, wooden panels, prepared cotton cloth and palm leaf. There are descriptions of beautifully painted wooden houses, and public halls full of pictures even in early Buddhist and Jain literature. Courtesans and Kings had pavilions filled with erotic pictures. One psychologically-minded woman even had a large hall painted with figures of all the different classes of men in various states of emotion. Prospective clients were taken into this hall and their characters and foibles estimated from their reactions to the different scenes. There is a vivid description in a Jain text of the guild of painters at work painting a picture gallery. It describes how they prepared the colours, laid the ground, divided the wall-surface and laid out their measurements for the designs. Elsewhere we learn that only the great master-painter is capable of dispensing altogether with proportional formulae and of drawing freehand even figures much over life-size. There are stories with a familiar ring that describe kings and birds being deceived by realistically painted peacock feathers and fruit. Many books and plays refer to the skill of amateur or semi-professional painters in capturing "likenesses" of their loved ones ; kings may even and, like Tamino, fall in love with a pretty picture. Especially are the stimulating and sensuous qualities of painting much admired by the laity. But monks are strictly warned to avoid like the plague painted houses and all pictures, as well as performances of music and dancing. It is hard to reconcile this injunction with some of the Buddhist paintings that do survive !

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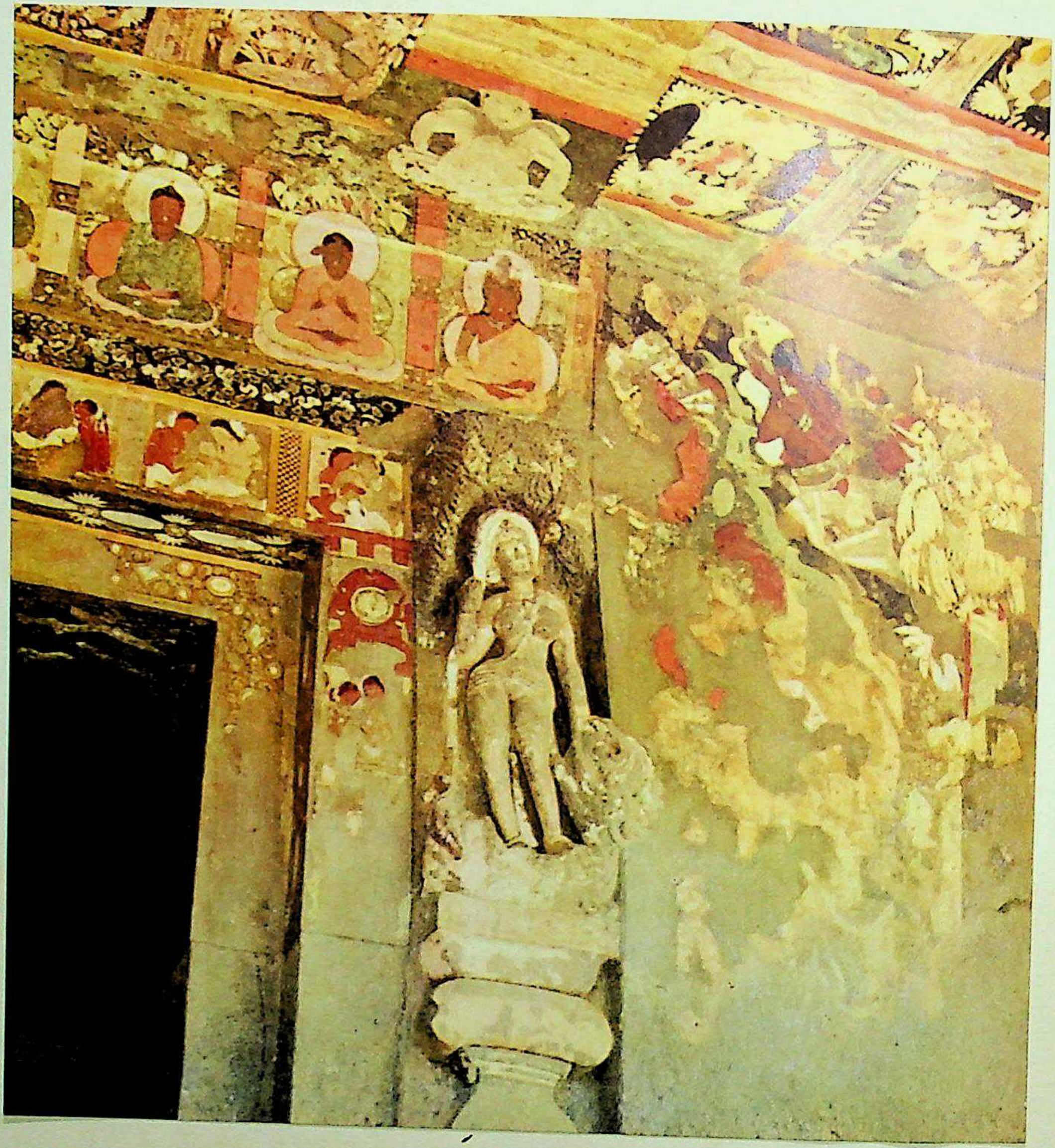
The carved ivory panels from the Begram hoard that date to the first century A. D., can perhaps give some idea of what the wall decorations and painted bibelots in rich men's houses must have been like. Obviously, from a very early date, Indian painting had developed those qualities of extreme sensuousness and erotic suggestion that are so marked in its later development. It is not improbable that by the beginning of the Christian era there was established in India a style of painting complementary to the sculptural styles of Barhut, Boghgaya, Mathura and Sanchi (early 2 nd century B. C. to 2 nd century A. D.). Indeed much of the relief carving on these early stone monuments displays a sense of pictorial composition that must derive from a purely pictorial tradition.

Here emerges an important point. Because the few fragmentary early works of Indian art are predominantly religious monuments executed in stone many people have been led to believe that Indian arts were all indelibly stamped with a religious character from their very beginnings. This is a complete misconception. It is obvious from the literature, and even from the subject-matter of the stone reliefs themselves, that an enormous amount of non-religious architecture and sculpture was executed in perishable materials such as wood and plaster. Time has destroyed all these more fragile works utterly, and one has only to reflect on the millions of painted houses that must once have existed to realise the extent of our loss. The Begram ivories, however, preserved underground in the sealed chambers of a merchant's house in Afghanistan, with their shallow reliefs filled with foliage, pretty girls at their toilet and gryphons, are clear evidence that even in early times, art in India spoke an independant language and was very far from being a purely religious phenomenon. It was occupied with topics of its own, and when it was invited into the service of religion it retained indelible marks of its lay background. Many people are struck by the apparently irrelevant or even irreligious character of some of the early wall paintings from Buddhist shrines like the scene of a young girl on a swing at Ajanta. But no one has yet been bold enough to draw the necessary inference, that painting no less than sculpture must have existed as an independant tradition which was able to adapt itself equally to the requirements of a rich man's harem, or the walls of a Buddhist monastery.



PANELLED CEILING AND ROW OF BUDDHAS — AJANTA — CAVE XVII — CA. 500

WALL PAINTING

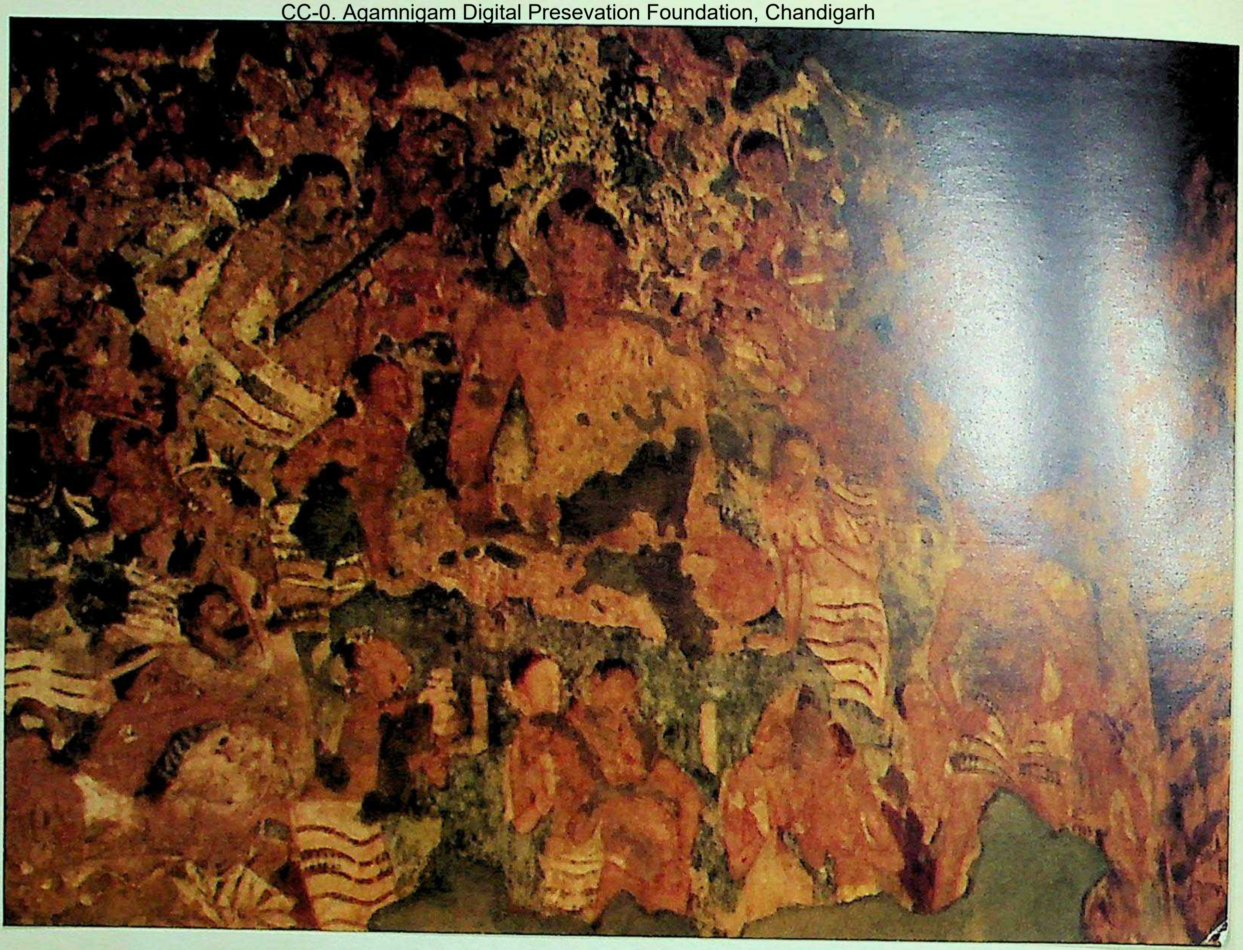
1 st C. A.D. - 7 th C. A.D.

AJANTA

The earliest wall paintings in the Buddhist caves of Ajanta are the oldest Indian paintings to survive; in the later ones we can trace the development of Indian painting for almost six centuries. Indeed had the paintings at Ajanta disappeared altogether we should have known practically nothing of the history of this magnificent phase of early art. That they did in fact survive, in face of all dangers and disasters, some caused during the last eighty years by responsible people who should have known better, is almost incredible. For centuries, possibly for two millenia, a one-day fair has been held annually at Ajanta, to which Hindus from neighbouring towns and villages flock on foot and in bullock carts, when the caves are visited with offerings by a continuous stream of visitors. But ever since Buddhism died in this part of the world, round about the ninth century A. D., the caves have been tenanted for the rest of the year only by bats, by the dangerous little poison-bees that nest in them, and by wandering mendicants with their smoky fires, all playing their part in the work of destruction.

There are twenty-seven caves at Ajanta, cut from the solid rock by men working with picks and flat chisels. Their execution covers a period of some eight centuries. The oldest of all is cave XIII cut probably in the 2nd century B. C., and the latest is nº I, made some time in the 7 th century A. D. Six of the caves contain considerable fragmentary remains of what must have once been a fantastically lavish and colourful decorative scheme (plate p. 20).

The setting is magnificent, among the jungle of the Western Ghats, not too far from Bombay, and easily accessible nowadays by a good motor road. In ancient times, through, the place was fairly remote, haunted by dangerous wild animals, and difficult of access, a suitable retreat for Buddhist monks who had abandoned the distracting turmoil of the world. The caves are cut into the face of a cliff which curves over a deep ravine filled with jungle scrub amongst which survive descendants of the food plants cultivated by the monks. Below, a small torrent rushes over its stony bed, making a wide hairpin bend. From it the monks would have been able to draw their water.

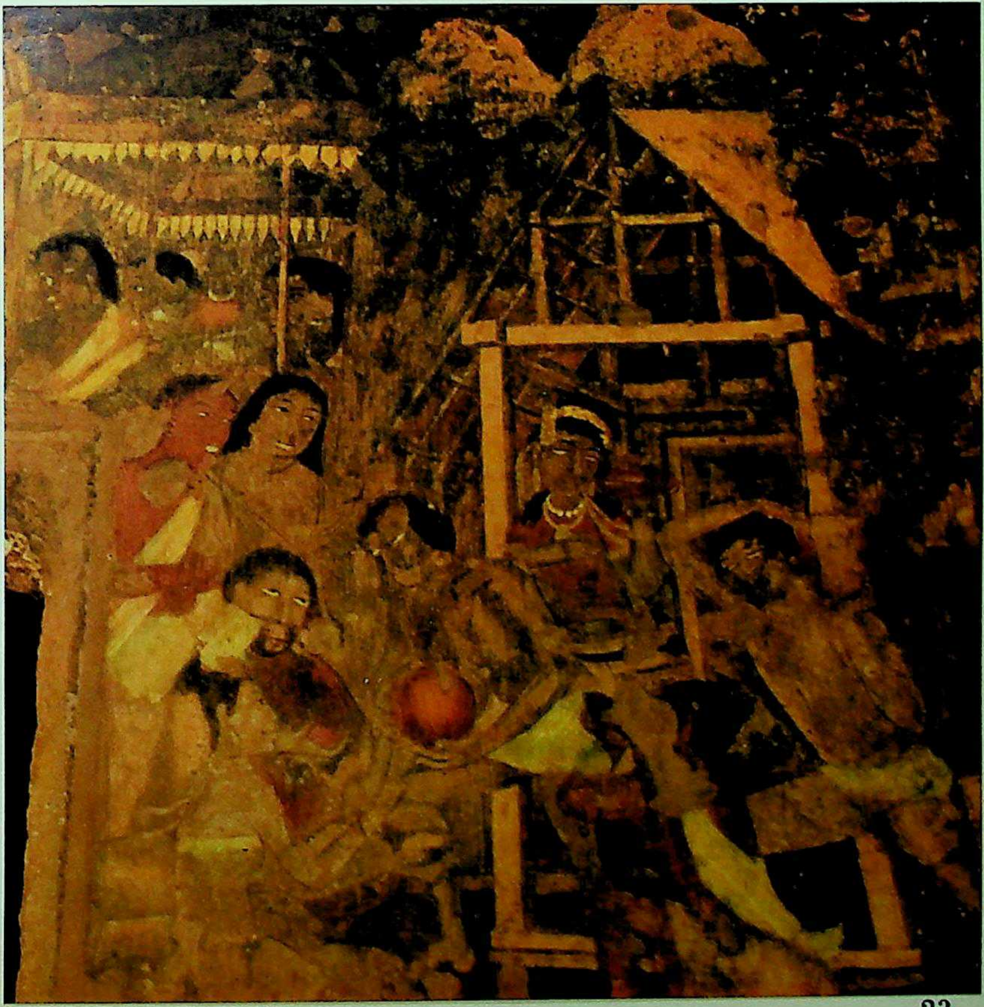


THE TEMPTATION OF BUDDHA BY MARA, THE LORD OF DEATH — AJANTA — CAVE I — CA. 600

The Buddah, who lived to be quite an old man, died about 489 B.C. It is not really correct to call the faith which he established a religion, since its essential character implies no sort of bondage. But the faith lives on at the present time, and is, during the twentieth century, displaying its adaptability to the conditions of modern life. The Buddha himself was born Gautama, the son of a prince of Kapilavastu, a city on the borders of modern Nepal, of the people of the Sakyas. According to the astrological prognostications at his birth—in ancient India these were always considered of the profoundest importance—the child was destined to be either a Chakravartin—a world conquering ruler—or a Buddha. This is an interesting ambiguity. For in a very important sense the Buddha did become a Chakravartin, a "turner of the wheel", in that his doctrine expounds and transcends the limits of the phenomenal universe which was figured in Indian symbolism as a wheel.

Gautama led the pampered existence of a young prince, shielded from all the harshness of real life. He married and had a son. But the gods, by sending across his path on his pleasure excursions first a sick man, then an old man, a dead man, and an ascetic, recalled him forcibly to his true mission to save all beings from suffering. Thereafter he left his home and family, and took to the wandering life of the Indian ascetic sage. He tried various doctrines and asceticisms, and found them all wanting. At length, having reached a point of no return, he took his seat under a pipal tree at Bodhgaya, and vowed he would not rise until he had achieved ultimate insight. After a period of intense meditation and, according to certain texts, a temptation by the lord of death, Mara, (plate p. 22) which is reminiscent of the

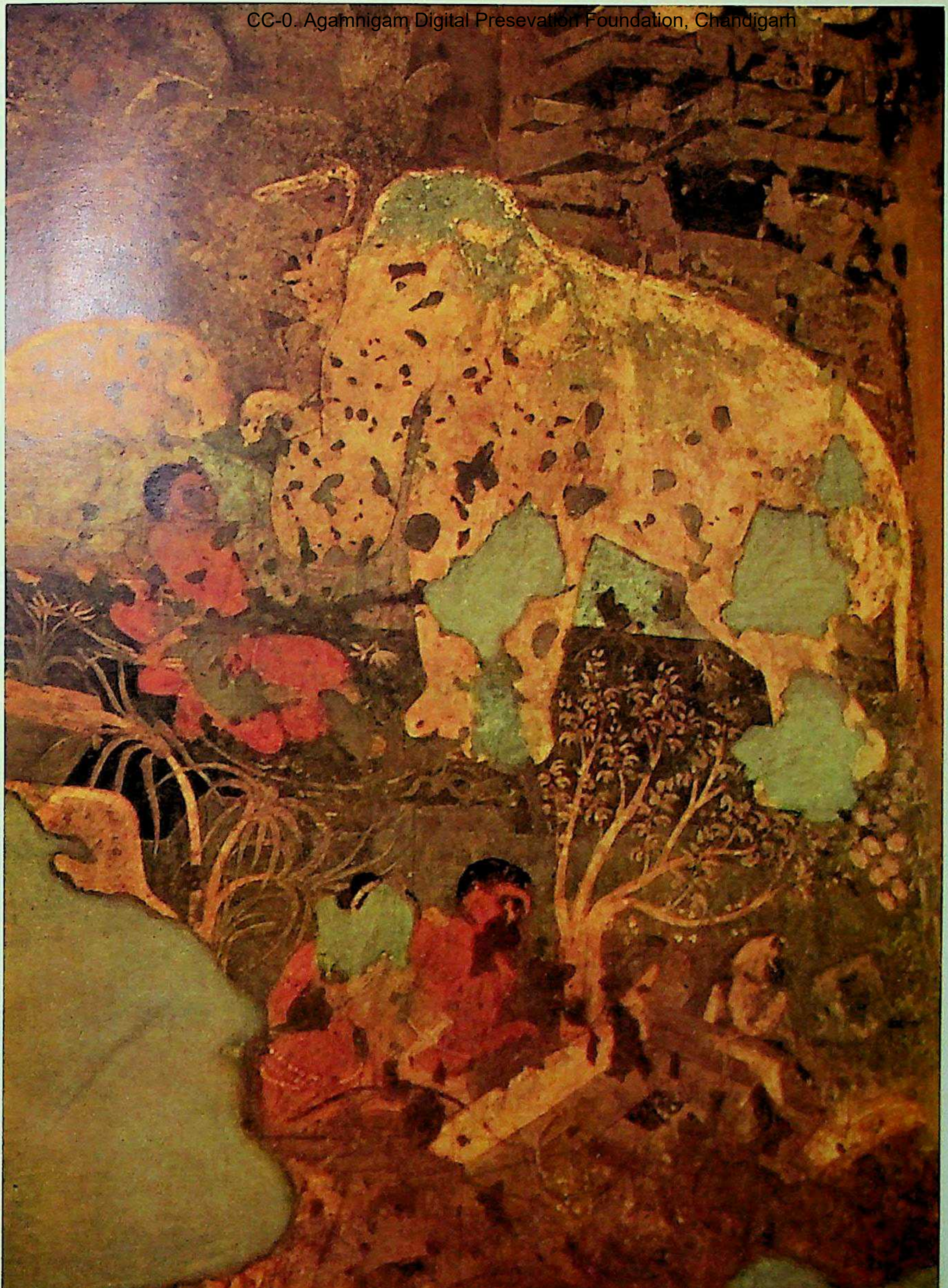
PART OF AN UNIDENTIFIED JATAKA — AJANTA — CAVE XVII — MID Vth CENT.



temptations of Christ and St. Anthony, he did achieve his goal. At this point, with the characteristic and familiar gesture of stretching down his hand to touch the ground with his fingertips, he called upon the Earth goddess to witness his right to Buddhahood. Thereafter he is called the Buddha, the awoken or enlightened one. His subsequent life was spent in preaching, in organising his order of disciples and laying down the fundamentals of morality and meditation, and of gaining influential patrons (plate p. 23). For, of course, the survival of a mendicant order depends in the last resort upon the willingness of a body of laity to contribute to its support.

There are many versions of the actual doctrines which the Buddha is supposed to have preached. None of them was written down less than three centuries after his death, and they display the special sectarian prepossessions of their authors. It is possible, however, to precipitate the kernel of intuition around which they are all formed. This consists in the recognition, meaningless and inexplicable unless it is experienced, that all objects are devoid of any intrinsic, separate reality, and that the notion of human selfhood is likewise delusory. Attachment to any false notions of reality constitutes bondage. The Buddhist order, with its disciplines which gradually destroy attachment, is the best road to that recognition. When it is experienced it transforms the whole of existence.

The early Buddhists, like most Indians of all ages, believed in reincarnation. Not only did they believe in it; they acted out their lives on that belief. Essentially, the belief is this. That each individual creature, human, sub-human, and even super-human—for the Gods are in a plight only a little better than the human—is during its life passing through only one of many phases of existence. After a "death" has supervened, by some always obscure function of regeneration, a new body appears somewhere whose existence and character is the product of the previous life. The pattern of the succesive rebirths is dominated by the general moral tendency of the lives lived, so that it becomes possible for a creaturely existence to move from a lowly realm in the insect or animal worlds towards the higher regions of human achievment. The Buddha himself passed through just such a series of rebirths, until the culminating human incarnation as Gautama, when he finally reached at Bodhgaya the goal of all Indian spiritual life, final release from the "wheel" of existence. The Buddha continued to live in human guise, but he was, in Indian terminology, "Jivanmukta", released whilst living. It is very interesting that in the earliest Buddhist art from India to survive, the carved stone stupa-railings of Barhut, Bodhgaya, and Sanchi, wherever a narrative scene of the Buddha's life subsequent to his enlightenment is represented, the figure of the Buddha himself is always missing. His presence is indicated only by symbols such as a pair of footprints, or a throne. The intention of this artistic idea is a positive one. For no physical resemblence could truly represent what the Buddha then was. A Buddha is one who has gained Nirvana, whose "self" has been blown out like a candle-flame (nir=out va=blow). The Buddha's physical death was called his "parinirvana", his complete nirvana. Thereafter, as the chain of his existences had been broken by the final elimination of the selfhood on which it depended, he returned no more.



PART OF THE SHADDANTA JATAKA — AJANTA — CAVE XVII — EARLY vth CENT.

Stories of the previous existences through which the Buddha had passed provided the subjects for an immense quantity of Buddhist art. Each of them offers a moral example of Buddhist behaviour, and illustrates the kind of complete self-abnegation for the good of others which leads ultimately to Buddhahood. These stories were collected at an early date, and were known as Jatakas. They tell of the Buddha's lives as monkey, deer, elephant, human prince and so on, in each of which he performs some supreme act of self-sacrifice (plate p. 25).

Ajanta was a Buddhist monastery. In Buddhism's early days the monks were forbidden by the rules of their order from settling in any single place. They had to live constantly on the move, never spending more than one night in any village, more than two nights in a country town, or more than three in a city. This was to prevent them from developing attachments. For it was only by renouncing all ties, all distinction between good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant, and so abandoning any support upon which they might by tempted to project the idea of "self", that monks would be able to attain the final insight which was their goal. Gradually, however, the full rigidity of this prohibition was abandoned. At first, monks were allowed to take refuge for the period of the monsoon rains in more or less permanent shelters provided by patrons of the order. These sometimes took the form of caves, and it is most probable that the earliest caves at Ajanta, especially nos. XIII, VIII and XII, were intended originally as such temporary shelters. In the course of time the advantages of corporate living, with its relative security and the opportunities it offered for intellectual interchange and study, overcame the older repugnance towards a settled life. Monasteries came to play an integral and important part in the cultural life of India. They formed, and still form in the many Buddhist countries of the world, the strong heart of the Buddhist faith. Ajanta was one of India's oldest monasteries.

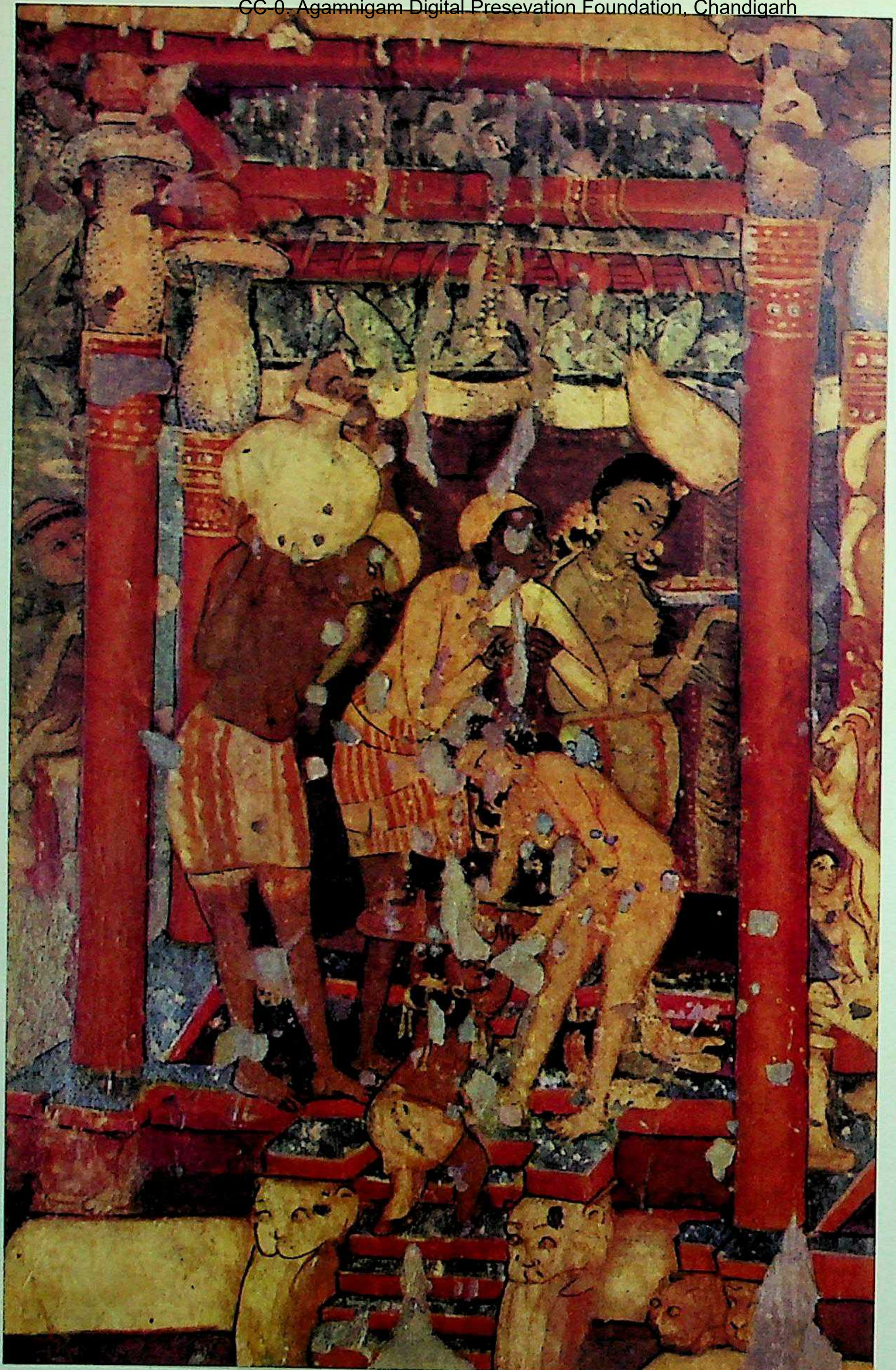
In the West we tend to think of caves as being dank, and probably unwholesome. But in India caves offer refuge from the terrible sun, and their grateful shadow is the coolest and most pleasant place to be found anywhere. The Indians too, seem always to have sensed something specially conducive to religious experience about them. For India is honeycombed with chambers cut into the living rock, the "body of mother Earth, Prithivi, the eternal supporter of all", where for millennia religious men have pursued their visionary goals. The living rock is a most potent symbol for that concept of eternity, of beginningless and endlessly self-repeating time, which has always haunted the Indian imagination. Meditation in a cave brings a man into the closest possible intimacy with that symbol and its meaning, and psychologically promotes a deep sense of security, the half-lit darkness fostering the concentration of the mind's forces which is essential to religious experience.

At Ajanta there are two types of caves. Both types are liberally ornamented with sculptured icons and decorative reliefs. The first is the so called "chaitya". This is a long apsidal hall, very much resembling a Roman basilica, with an internal colonnade that continues round the apse to form an ambulatory. At the end, within the semicircle of the colonnade, stands a large, domed, rock-cut emblem, the stupa. The shape of this derives by a series of developments from the burial tumuli in which the bodily relics of the Buddha and Buddhist saints were originally enshrined. By the time that the chaitya caves of Ajanta were cut it had come to serve simply as an emblem of the subtle body of the Buddha-nature, incorporating the ultimate Truth concerning Reality and trenscendant morality. The external facades of the chaityas are adorned with somewhat monotonous and repetitive Buddhist sculpture, much of it added centuries after the original completion of the caves. The upper or clerestory level of the facade is pierced by a large, horseshoe-shaped window framed in an ogival hood-moulding which was originally filled with a wooden lattice.

There are four such chaityas at Ajanta, caves n^os^ IX, X, XIX and XXVI. Caves IX and X both contain paintings, some of those in cave X being the earliest of all. This type of cave was probably meant to be used as a preaching hall. In the early days of Buddhism the sacred texts in which the tradition and the Doctrine were expressed were not written down. Like most of India's early sacred literature they were memorised. So recitation of the texts by the particular monks who knew them, for the benefit of their brother monks and of any of the laity who cared to come in and listen, was the most important public activity in any monastery.

The second type of cave at Ajanta is the living cave, the "vihara". This follows the pattern of the typical Asiatic sarai; a court surrounded by little rooms. The earlier living caves at Ajanta have only a small rectangular central court whose roof needs no support. However, the larger, later living caves, some of which have two storeys, needed column-systems to support the rock roof over the central area; they were later supplied with a small chapel at the very back containing a colossal rock-cut image of the Buddha with attendants, and had decorated vestibules. In the cells leading off the viharas are small stone benches on which the monks were supposed to sleep; a count of the available accommodation suggests that something like 300 monks were able to live comfortably at Ajanta during the 7 th century, when its expansion was complete. Apart from the oldest vihara of all, n° XIII, the walls of which have been polished to a glassy surface as much of the oldest stonework in India was, the other viharas were probably all once painted. Now unfortunately, there are substantial remains only in n^os^ I, II, XVI and XVII, though less subtantial fragments survive in caves IV, V, VI, VII, and XI. Even as recently as 1879 there were large sections still preserved in five other caves. Unhappily destruction was only hastened by the opening up of the caves to visitors and misguided attempts at restoration made things even worse.

The Ajanta paintings are executed in a technique that has not been completely analysed, but can now be estimated with practical certainty. It is not a true fresco, for the colours are not bonded to the plaster on the wall by means of a lime-skin of calcium carbonate. The basis, however, is lime; pure white lime which was probably obtained from calcined shells. It is laid on very thin and fine, over layers of coarser stuff, into which straw and clay and powdered rock are compounded. The



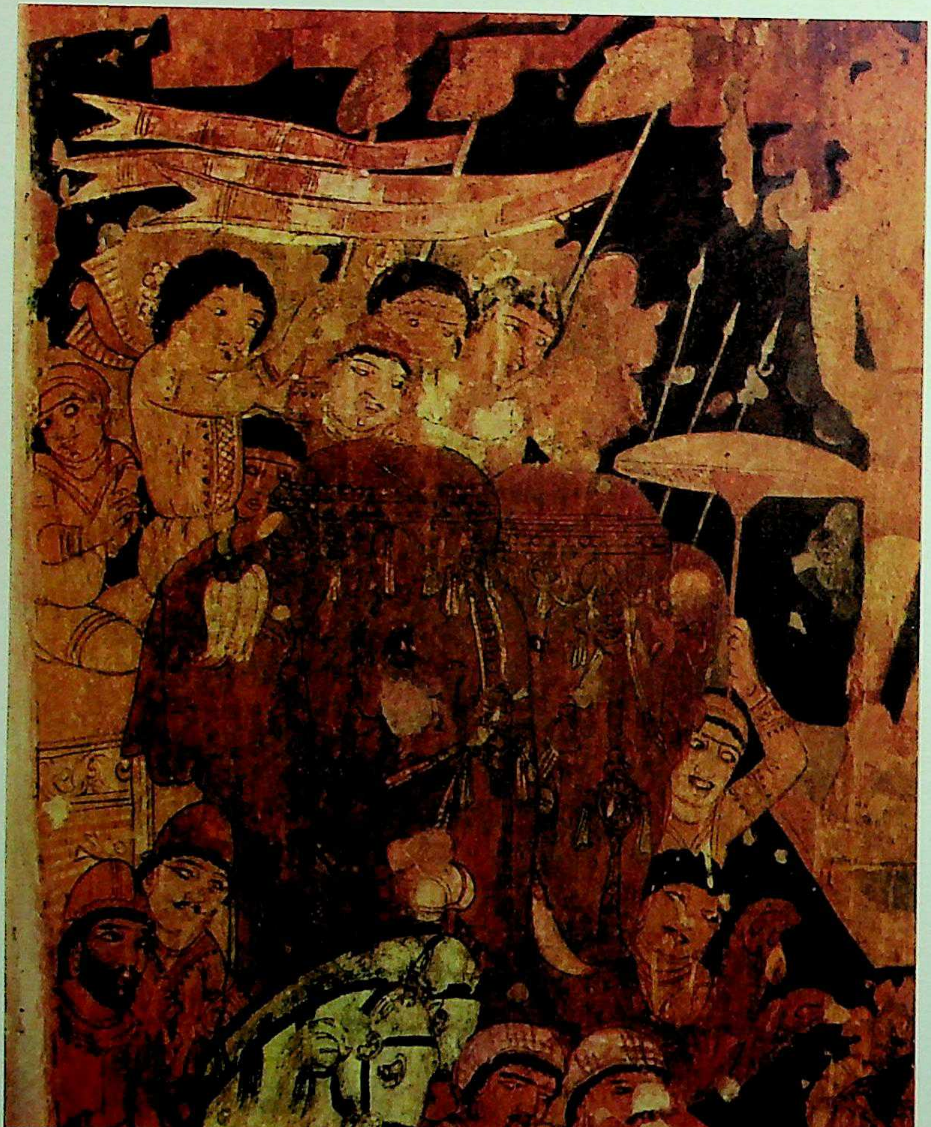
ATTENDANTS AT A SCENE OF LUSTRATION — AJANTA — CAVE I — CA. 600

lime finish was put on a few millimetres thick, then polished with the trowel and so condensed. On this ivory—smooth surface the figures were painted in colours obtained from the natural resources of the Indian countryside. Red and yellow earths, malachite green, and possibly some more fugitive colours that we can no longer see, such as those obtained from vegetable materials, like madder and indigo. In the later part of the fifth century was added to the palette the blue of ground lapis lazuli, imported from the upper reaches of the Oxus river in Badakshan, the same source whence European artists like Duccio and Rubens obtained theirs. The colours were mixed with one of the powerful Indian vegetable gums that contain a proportion of drying oil, such as the juice of the nim or kapittha.

Since Indian painters have always seized the reality of their subjects through the contour, the first statement which the wall painters of Ajanta gave their forms on the white plaster surface was a complete contour, often executed in red. The enclosed areas were then tinted; sometimes tonal modelling was applied; and then the contours were reinforced, generally in black or brown. In the earliest stages of art at Ajanta the contour is not reinforced by modelling, but by the 5th century some sort of tonal emphasis was in use, and remained so until the 7th.

The contour draughtmanship of the Ajanta painters did not treat the figures as cut-outs, silhouettes filled in with details. Nor were their outlines executed, like those of the Japanese, as calligraphic lines. The early medieval Indian contour was always phrased in such a way that the relationship of the outlines indicated the presence between them of a rounded solid. The first element of the meaning of any line is the volume it encloses. For this painting is very closely connected with sculpture. The sculptural decoration of Indian buildings has nearly always been lightly plastered and painted; on some of the Ajanta sculptures traces of this finish still survive. In one sense Indian painting was always striving after the relief effect of coloured sculpture, whilst retaining the other properties of its own mode. Over the centuries, in their search for prominence and the apperance of relief, the painters cultivated a contour with progressively more deeply rounded and emphatic undulations, the more intensely to lay hold on a substantial content. The kind of tonal modelling, without cast shadows, which they adopted was intended to reinforce this plastic intention, and bears no relationship to Western ideas of chiaroscuro, which become meaningless in the glare of the fierce Indian sun with its harsh contrast of light and dark. A western artist who has cultivated a method in some way resembling the Indian is Maillol in his drawings. At Ajanta modelling is tied to the contour; it is almost a "function" of the contour, and arises naturally from it. It darkens or intensifies the colour of the parts which turn away towards the edge of the form and recede from the eye, whilst those parts of the surface of a form which are intended to be nearest to the eye are sometimes emphasised by patches of clear, bright colour and sometimes by a sparse brushing of the main tint which allows the white ground to show through. The heightened effect of plasticity which results is exactly the same as that which nylon stockings give to a girl's legs, giving them an added "presence". However no description can do justice to the sure-handed mastery with which the Ajanta painters laid in their designs, drawing them freely and swiftly in colour on many different scales, stating clearly and directly the volumes that swell with life like ripening fruit (plate p. 28).

Unfortunately the colour that does survive on these walls can only retain a shadow of its former splendour. But there is no doubt that it must once have glowed with an intense brilliance. For the Indians have always derived great stimulation and satisfaction from the sheer intensity of colours rich in chromatic overtones. At Ajanta we find no more attempt at naturalism of colour than of drawing. In Paolo Ucello's or Franz Marc's fantasy worlds we meet blue and orange horses. At Ajanta we meet blue, orange, brown, green and purple girls, as well as the more familiar white, pink and gold. Strict iconology may find a rationale for all



PRINCELY FIGURES RIDING UP TO HEAR THE BUDDHA PREACH — AJANTA CAVE I — MID Vth CENT.

these tints in ancient Indian expositions of the colours attributed to India's different races. But as they appear in these caves they give a kaleidoscopic charm to their imaginary population who thus appear to us as the inhabitants of an exotic paradise.

At the narrative level the paintings at Ajanta all have some relevance to Buddhist legend. They represent scenes from many sources, from the early life of the Buddha, for example, when the Buddha himself appears as a participant, sometimes in his guise of the "Golden Person". He quells a furious elephant. he begs for alms, he converts his brother Nanda. In the Jataka stories which describe the many previous lives the Buddha has, like all living beings, traversed, he appears performing those actions of supreme self-sacrifice which ultimately qualified him for total enlightenment. In these pictures he is shown as a king elephant with six tusks, a royal monkey, or a splendid deer laying down his life on behalf of his own tribe in a garden landscape of rocks, trees and lotus-carpeted ponds. In the later caves a more developed iconography appears, with doctrinal expositions of the multiplicity of the Buddha-nature and the compassionate images of Bodhisattvas. Sometimes the piety of a prince is commemorated in an idealised picture of himself and his retinue visiting the sacred spot.

But whatever the overt subject-matter it is obvious that the painters of these pictures have one primary concern, a meaning and intention that rises directly out of the forms they have created independant of the story they happen to be telling. The princess fainting at the sight of the sacred tusks of the great elephant, her husband of a previous incarnation, is no expressionist image of pathos or despair, no paragon of transcendental vision as the story itself might suggest. She is, with all the rest of this population, an image of physical wellbeing, of beauty and delight. The Buddha himself, the Golden Person, is simply the best endowed of them all. Even the assemblies of bystanders who are in attendance on some of the great events of Buddhist history, with their strongly differentiated faces and characteristic costumes that are derived via Gandhara from the comedy maskers of Imperial Roman sculpture, are legitimate inhabitants of this world of fantasy (plate p. 30).

The method by which these stories are told is the same method of continuous narration used in late Roman and in European mediaeval art. The chief participants in any legend appear in the picture a number of times engaged in successive phases of the action of the story. In the legend of the six-tusked elephant, for example, we see him twice with his wives in the lotus pond, and again bowing down to the hunter to let him kill him. We see the hunter several times, on his way to the forest, killing the elephant, returning with the tusks. And we see the elephant's embittered wife as an elephant, then again twice reincarnated as the queen who makes her husband send to have the royal six-tusked animal slain, and who faints at the sight of his tusks. This is one of the traditional ways in which the element of time is introduced into the spatial, intrinsically static universe of pictorial art.

The settings of landscape, city, palace and garden are full of anecdotal detail; windows and balconies are occupied by people who watch the street, comb their hair or make love (plate p. 33), the rocks and hills have their appropriate animals, birds and hermits. It was part of the great skill of the earlier painters at Ajanta, a skill which later centuries lost to some extent, that they were able to combine all these different aspects of a story into a single composition which in terms of space and pictorial design is entirely consistent and full of the variety of life.

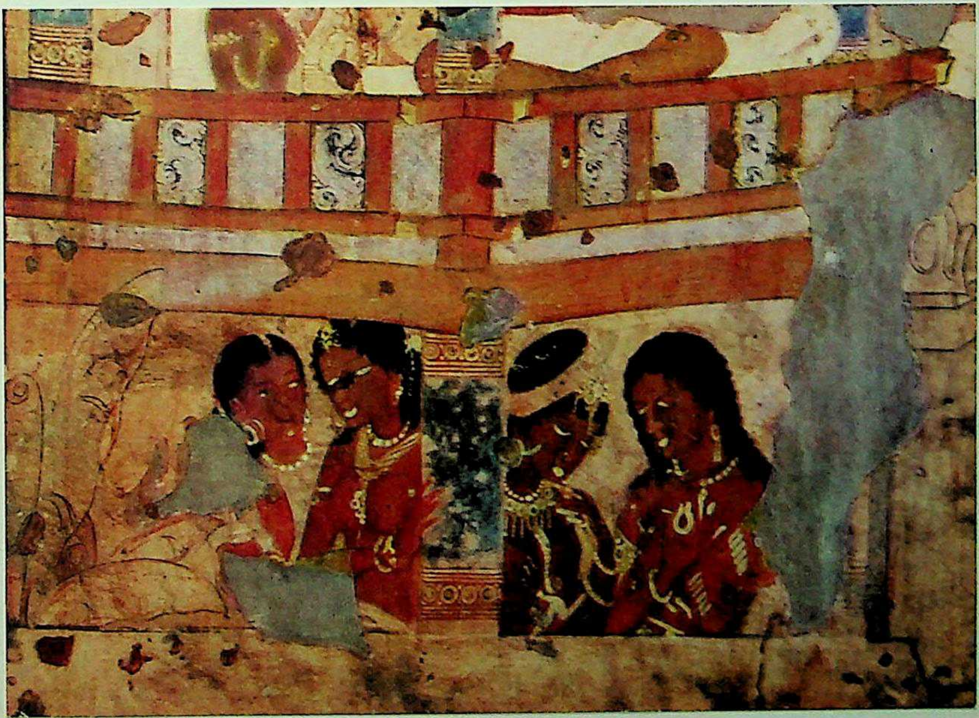
It must be obvious that even if the artists of Ajanta had painted the entire interior of these caves several times over—the painting in one or two of the caves reveals several layers—their tremendous skill could not have been achieved and maintained by working at Ajanta alone. Nor, it is clear, were they amateurs, monks who had some facility with the brush. The volume and confidence of their work is too great. They must have been professional artists engaged for various periods over the centuries to adapt their skill to painting the walls of the Buddhist monastery. Thus, what is at Ajanta preserved for us by a combination of fortunate circumstances, is a series of fragments illustrating something of what must have been a very vital, widespread and continuous art of mural painting. The artists brought to their Buddhist subject matter a skill and an attitude that were simply Indian, not particulary Buddhist. It would seem to have been very much contrary to the strictest Buddhist monastic regulations that a dwelling for monks should have been adorned with such pictures, attractive and pleasing to the senses. For the justification of their presence we must look to that Indian conception of ornament discussed in the introduction. The paintings, with their handsome moustachioed men, their seductive girls, their animals full of vitality, and their Bodhisattvas decked with the silks and jewels of paradise, are there because they are ornamental. Their very presence is an appropriate expression of respect for the place they adorn.

The earliest paintings at Ajanta in chaitya caves IX and X show a style that is very close to the narrative relief style on the gateways of the Buddhist stupas at Sanchi. There is one special feature of the costume of the women, the big hood with hair braided into it, that helps to fix the relationship. For in the course of the execution of the Sanchi gates this style went out of fashion, whereas it was worn by the woman in a famous Indian ivory carving that was found at Pompeii (overwhelmed by Vesuvius in 79 A.D.). In fact we can fairly date these early Ajanta paintings somewhere near 50 A.D.

At the beginning of the Christian era India was coming, probably for the first time, to discover the commercial possibilities of her products. Her merchants had begun to make profitable contact with traders from the Western world. Under Augustus the Romans had taken advantage of the pacification of Egypt to open arteries of trade towards the East. Along the road that linked the Nile Valley with the ancient port of Muziris on the Red Sea garrisons and staging posts with wells had been set up. The sailors, probably using boats very similar to the dhows of to-day, had learned to take advantage of the monsoon winds that blow steadily at certain seasons of the year to strike out from the coast across the blue water of the Indian Ocean, and make their landfall on the Deccan peninsular. Around the coasts of India, where there were good harbours, a number of large ports grew up to which the Indian merchants travelled with their merchandise along the trunk roads of the sub-continent. The hoards of Roman gold found at various spots in India supplement the shocked protestations of the Elder Pliny to make it quite clear that the balance of trade was very much in India's favour, and that luxuries from the East enjoyed a huge demand amongst the nouveaux riches of the Roman "Imperial decadence". India's merchants became very wealthy indeed.

Buddhism was always very much a merchants' religion. It is no accident that it spread and established its monasteries along the trade-routes of Asia. In one sense the roots of Buddhist doctrine can be traced in the oldest monument of Indian mystical metaphysics, the early Upanishads, especially the Brihadaranyaka and the Chandogya. But the Brahmanical system that was developing its full formal rigidity during the few centuries after the birth of Christ was tending to impose its own exclusive view of religious privilege on Indian society. So that, although in some of the Upanishads themselves we meet revered religious teachers who are not of Brahmin caste, by the beginning of the Christian era the full privileges of religious knowledge and education seem to have come to be confined to the Brahmins alone. The other three recognised classes of society, the Kshatriyas—landlords and warriors, the Vaishyas—traders and craftsmen, the Shudras—the toiling masses of the people, were excluded by birth from any direct personal participation in spiritual life.

WOMEN AT A WINDOW — AJANTA — CAVE II — LATE vth CENT.



It is thus possible legitimately to interpret the teachings of the Buddha and of Mahavira, the great teacher of the Jain faith who lived at about the same time, as nonconformist versions of doctrines of great antiquity. While the merchant classes of India were gaining their great access of wealth, through their constant travels and contacts with a larger world beyond the shores of India they must have developed a sophistication and breadth of mind that could no longer be satisfied with the humble role allotted to them in the Brahmin scheme of things. The teachings of the Buddha offered to them both spiritual satisfaction and a genuine hope of spiritual advance throughout the vast series of rebirths to which they looked-forward.

It is most probable that Buddhism in the early decades of the Christian era offered more tangible benefits as well. The dedicatory inscriptions on some of the early Buddhist monuments make it quite clear that the merchants from all parts of India who visited the holy places on their travels, and helped to pay for their decoration, were not only envisaging long-term results from their works of merit. The frequent presence of the Goddess Shri, the goddess of good fortune and abundance, on the Buddhist shrines, and the ornamentation of the railing of the Barhut stupa, for example, with a continuous scroll representing the wish-granting tree, hung with jewels, silk cloths and girls, show that fairly immediate results were expected from patronage of the Buddhist order. It is probable too that in the north-west of India, where Buddhism flourished along the land routes between the middle-east and China, it was the practice for Buddhist patrons of privileged status to be awarded the title of Bodhisattva. All these, however, are simply evidence of the fact that the Buddhists, like any monastic begging order, needed to win and keep the support of a sympathetic body of the laity even to survive at all. That the support on which the Buddhists could count at this time went far beyond immediate material necessities is clearly shown by the amount of money that was spent on the decoration of hundreds of Buddhist establishments. Among these was Ajanta, which lies not far away from three of the chief west-coast ports of ancient times.

When the earliest paintings at Ajanta were made there were probably only six caves at the site, two were chaitya caves and four were living caves; or rather rain-shelter caves.

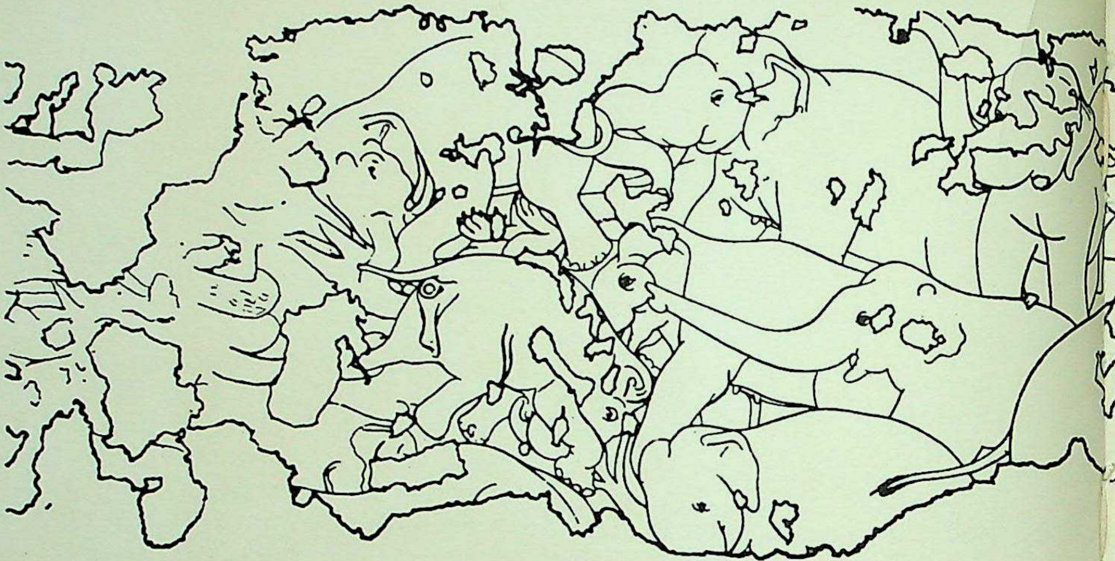
Ajanta's earliest painting, the enormously long continuous composition of the Shaddanta Jataka along the walls of cave X is one of the most beautiful but is unfortunately one of the worst damaged (seedrawing). The first two-thirds of the painting to the left is occupied with scenes of the life of the elephants, who swing their trunks and play among the lotuses and flowering trees. The connected series of incidents contains about fifty figures of elephants. The six-tusked king-elephant, the future Buddha, attempts to please and pacify the jealous one of his wives. The right third is occupied with palace scenes full of figures of men and women illustrating the jealous elephant-wife's reincarnation as the wife of a king. She persuades the king to send a hunter to kill the six-tusked elephant and take his ivory. When the royal beast has offered himself willingly to be slain, and the hunter has returned with the tusks, she faints with horror at the sight, and bitterly repents.

The material technique of this picture is in some ways simpler than that of the later work; there is no blue, for example; Badakshan with its lapis lazulae was perhaps inaccessible as yet, and a fugitive vegetable blue may have been used. The flesh tones are all executed in a deep purplish brown, and the lips are flecks of clear red, perhaps a well-burnt earth. But the intellectual technique is highly developed. There are complex overlapping groups of elephants and men, placed among trees and buildings that create wonderfully intelligible space. The movement of all the figures is rendered with great expression and assists by its latent suggestion the creation of this pictorial space. The artist was quite prepared to tackle three-quarter, tail-or head-on views of considerable difficulty, according to the needs of his imagined reality. It is obvious that whoever painted this great mural was gifted with a most highly developed visual imagination. Each figure and each group is invented afresh, not merely compounded from stereotypes. His sensuous appreciation of life and his love for the endless variety of reality is reflected in his direct and fluent drawing with the brush. Some writers have suggested that this picture must be related in style and date to the reliefs of Barhut (ca. 120 B. C.). But this is impossible. It is inconceivable that so highly developed a conception of pictorial structure should have existed in Sunga India. The nearest parallel is, as I have pointed out, in the stone reliefs of the Sanchi gateways. But even these, with their crowded compositions subject to the exigencies of relatively primitive techniques of relief-carving, display nothing of the skill in composition claimed by the Ajanta master.

There survive in cave X other fragmentary paintings in similar style. Some, such as the visiting Rajah with his retinue, are far less ambitious in their compositions, and some, such as the Shyama Jataka, are distinctly less skilful. All of them, however, belong to the same period, and contain female figures wearing the distinctive hood that relates them to the earlier Sanchi gateway women and the women on the Indian ivory found at Pompeii. In cave X, as well, there is a long scene representing devotees approaching and worshipping a decorated stupa which is executed in the same style and is perhaps by the same painter. But this again lacks the elan of the "Shaddanta" composition, perhaps because the subject matter offered less of a challenge to the artist's inventive capacity.

Little executed during the next two or three centuries survives, though it is probable that a good deal once existed. There is only one fragment of any size, a decorative design on the architrave of the colonnade in cave IX, much damaged, which is generally believed to date from the 2nd-3rd century A.D. It represents a frieze of wild animals alternating with running male figures who wear pointed caps with hoods. These caps resemble the pointed hats worn by Scythian types in the sculpture of Mathura and in late Classical art. The design too is reminiscent of certain decorative relief friezes carved on the monuments of Amaravati, and all such details tend to confirm the suggested date.

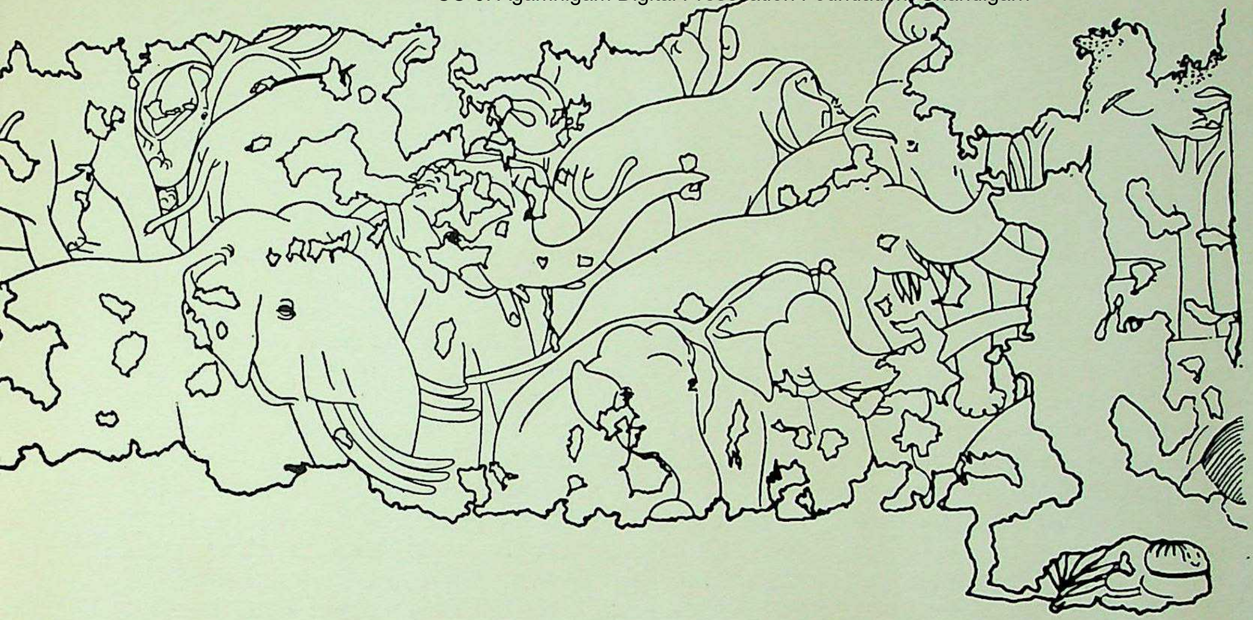
The "Guptas" have gained a legendary place in Indian cultural history, and something must be said about them, since they are so often mentioned in connection with the next group of paintings at Ajanta. They were a dynasty of rulers founded in 320 A.D. whose main region of influence was the Ganges valley, with its capital at Pataliputra. Some of them laid claim to an empire covering the major part



SCENE OF THE LIFE OF THE ELEPHANTS – AJANTA – CAVE - EARLY I ST C. A.D.
TAKEN FROM A FRAGMENTARY SCENE

of northern India, ar far south as the Vindhyas and perhaps extending south of the Narmada river. They were at the height of their power and influence about 400 A.D. and flourished for some eighty years after. It is generally believed that ca. 480 their power was broken by the incursion of the White Huns.

Ancient Indian history is at best fragmentary. The territorial claims and counter claims of rival dynasties are of serious concern to historians, but for the most part this history is a kind of complicated and speculative game of "*go*" with dynastic names on the counters. There is virtually nothing to give us any idea of what dynastic suzerainty meant in practice. Certainly we infer such generalities as the payment of tribute, a centralised administration, some sort of peace within the borders, and an increase of prosperity for merchants and kings. The greatest emperor of all, Ashoka, even set up hospitals and planted shade trees on the roads. But from the way in which, after the eclipse of a dynasty the feudal structure of the kingdom seems, as it were, to have unravelled itself down to its fundamental factors in the regional rulers, we must equally infer that, short of destructive invasion by an alien race, the presence or absence of a distant overlord may well have made very little difference to local patterns of cultural life. Certainly in the earlier phases of Indian history the great Buddhist establishments may have owed their continuing safety to the protection of rulers; but direct patronage they owed chiefly to wealthy citizens and the guilds, as the inscriptions on many early monuments testify. The same general rule applies as applies in the history of European art - where money is being spent, for whatever reason, there artists and craftsmen will congregate. What is highly doubtful, though it is always taken for granted by writers on Indian history,



is the extent of central "influence" on the actual artistic styles of peripheral centres of culture. Not nearly so great as has usually been believed!

The age of the Guptas was graced by a great flowering of Sanskrit literature. Poetry and the drama are believed by many people to have attained then a peak of perfection never afterwards achieved. Certainly it seems that the archaic language of the Vedas, which even by the third century B.C. was a cumbrous and inflexible fossil, was overtaken by a new kind of Sanskrit, developed especially as a lingua-franca for the learned and artistic, whose own mother tongues were the various sub-sanskritic dialects of regional India. Where this Sanskrit, that became for later centuries the standard vehicle of literate communication, itself came from is a very interesting question. "Scythian" rulers of Western India, the Kshatrapas, were the only pre-Gupta dynasty to use Sanskrit for their inscriptions, and it is, indeed, widely believed amongst native Indian scholars that the greatest poet of India, Kalidasa, who is supposed by others to have adorned a Gupta court, in fact flourished under the Kshatrapas two centuries before the birth of Christ. Certainly the great Sanskrit grammarian, Patanjali (2nd c. B.C.) was a leading figure in the preliminary purification and refurbishing of Sanskrit.

It was the Gupta rulers who developed the use of the Devanagari script for their inscriptions, and made calligraphy of it. They also used poetical Sanskrit for their stone-cut records. Here too they set a precedent for later ages. So it is probably correct to say that the literary side of Indian culture first settled into its characteristic mould during the Gupta era.

In the sphere of visual art it has often been said that the years of Gupta rule were the "classical" age of Indian art. To this it may be possible to give a qualified assent, for one particular meaning of "classical". For about the few surviving fifth century Buddhist sculptures, especially those from Sarnath, there is an atmosphere of peace, poise and tranquility investing human figures of ideal beauty that is distinctly reminiscent of the post-Winckelmann idea of the "classical" in nineteenth century Europe. The scrolled floral ornament used with the figures in confined to specific areas—the border of the halo, for example—and displays great restraint and delicacy. But there is a good deal of "Gupta" sculpture, in terracotta and in stone, which it would be inept to call "classical" in this sense; some is distinctly farouche, and some of a stylised hieratic character. However, it is clear that it is the Buddhist sculpture of Sarnath which springs to most people's minds when the emotive catchword "Gupta" is used. And it is also clear that people who describe the fifth century paintings at Ajanta as "Gupta" in style or atmosphere are thinking of the same sculpture. Largely, it must be admitted, because there is nothing else contemporary to compare with them. And whilst we must certainly believe that the palaces of the Gupta capital at Pataliputra were painted in a truly Gupta style, we must at the same time admit that we have not the faintest idea of what this great "Imperial" style was like. To assert, therefore, that Ajanta painting is a provincial derivative of the Gupta style is a solecism. Fifth century Painting at Ajanta is the legitimate descendant of first and second century paintings at Ajanta, and in all its stylistic characteristics resembles the stone relief sculpture of the Shatavahana monuments of the Deccan. An inscription in cave XVI at Ajanta shows that it was patronised by a local Vakataka king ; and we know that another Vakataka married a Gupta princess. On such a tenuous basis reposes the whole theory of "Gupta" art at Ajanta.

It is in Caves II, XVI, and XVII that the chief remains of fifth century painting can be found. And it is clear that a considerable evolution of pictorial ideas has taken place. Where earlier the continuous narrative had been laid out in a band to be read from left to right, along the length of a wall, we can see from the sadly few fragments that remain that in the fifth century pictorial space had evolved into a kind of continuous web extending vertically as well as horizontally, over large areas of surface. Within this web, the whole action of a story can be identified as if were in progress simultaneously all over the wall (plate p. 41).

The Indian's world is a populous one. Usually he lives immersed in a crowd, as an intimitate part of his social group of relatives and friends. His house is probably a "joint family" establishment, with brothers contributing to the upkeep of all their families together, and the house is therefore full of children, of noise and probably squabbling. This way of life is reflected in Indian art. For every action takes place amonst a crowd of bystanders; or, if the scene represents some incident in the lonely ascetic life of the Buddha, a crowd of heavenly beings are in attendance. No royal personage can ever be left without at least two servants ready at once to execute his lightest whim (plate p. 40). Life only has meaning within the sphere of human, social action. Landscapes are never, presented as they were in Chinese art, for their own sake as images of the spiritual condition of the artist. Only in certain Rajput paintings may they represent an extension of the mood of the single person who appears in the picture.

The earlier fifth-century paintings at Ajanta are of a remarkably restrained and touchingly humble execution. There is no attempt at that bravura which

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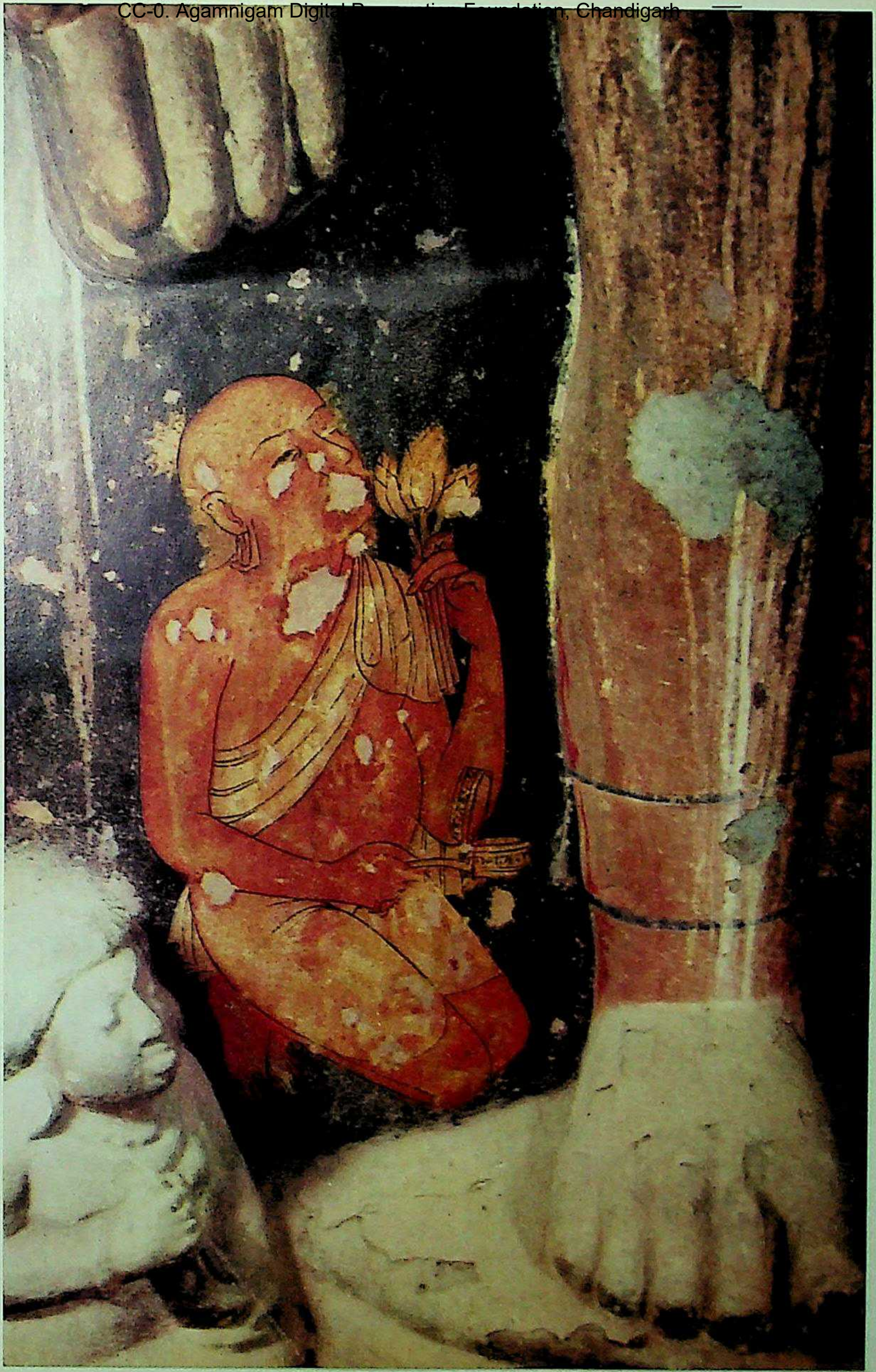
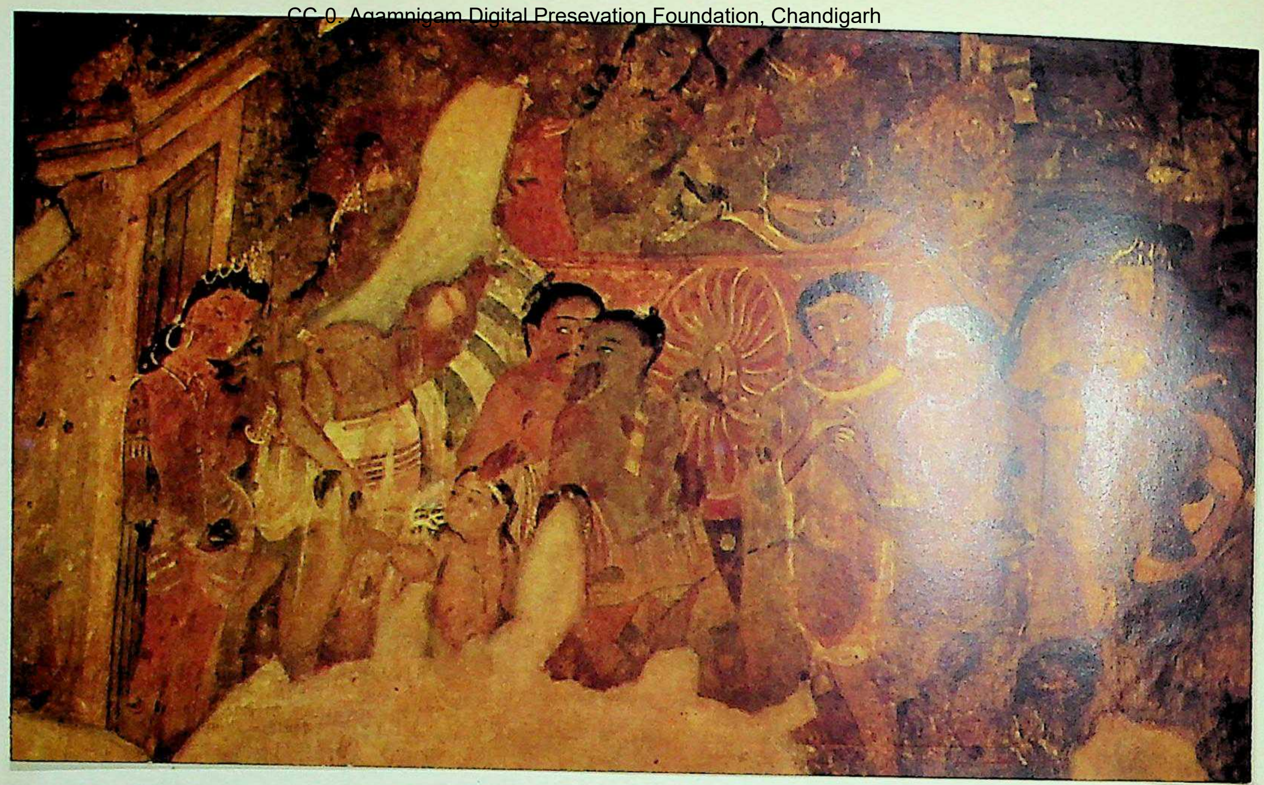


A MONK KNEELING BEFORE A COLOSSAL SCULPTURED FIGURE OF THE STANDING BUDDHA — CAVE VI — MID Vth CENT.



THE PRINCE DRIVING IN HIS CHARIOT — AJANTA — CAVE XVII — EARLY vth CENT.

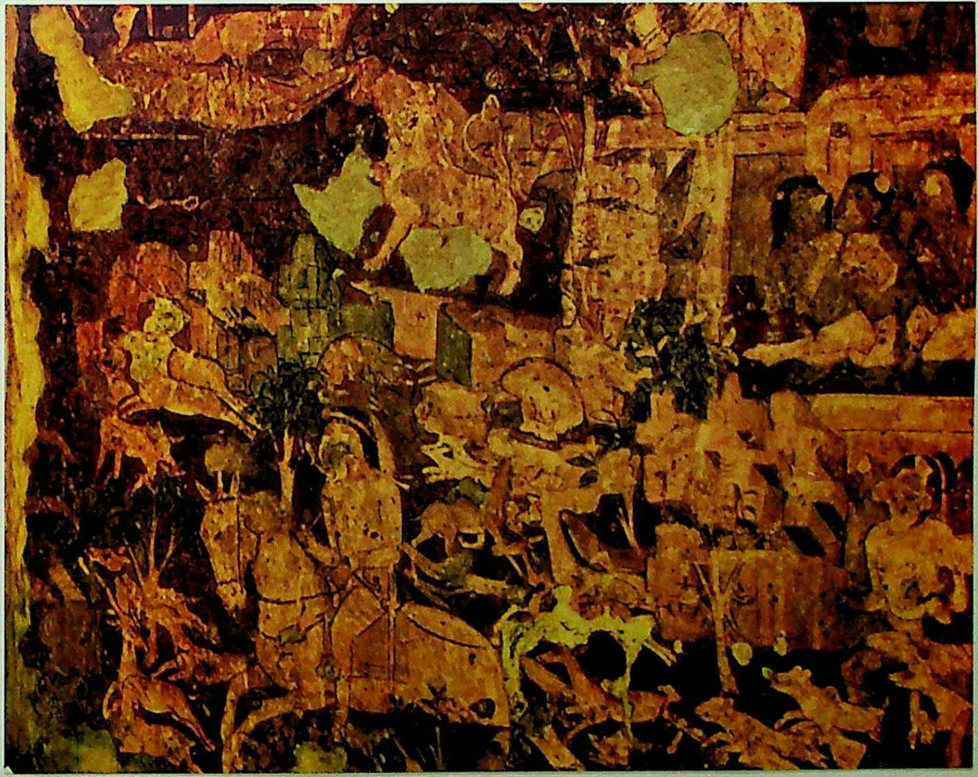
enters the Ajanta style half a century later. The outlines with which the figures are defined arise in natural response to the needs of representation. They enclose the figures with, as it were, a modest consent that the reality of the figures alone is what matters. The artist does not interpose himself and his skill, claiming our attention for his achievment. Gestures are restrained; the people express their respect towards one another with gently sideways or forward inclined heads; and even scenes of violence, like the murder of a child in cave XVI taking place before the vista of a seaport, are pervaded with a kind of enclosed peace that is the special creation of the forms of this art.

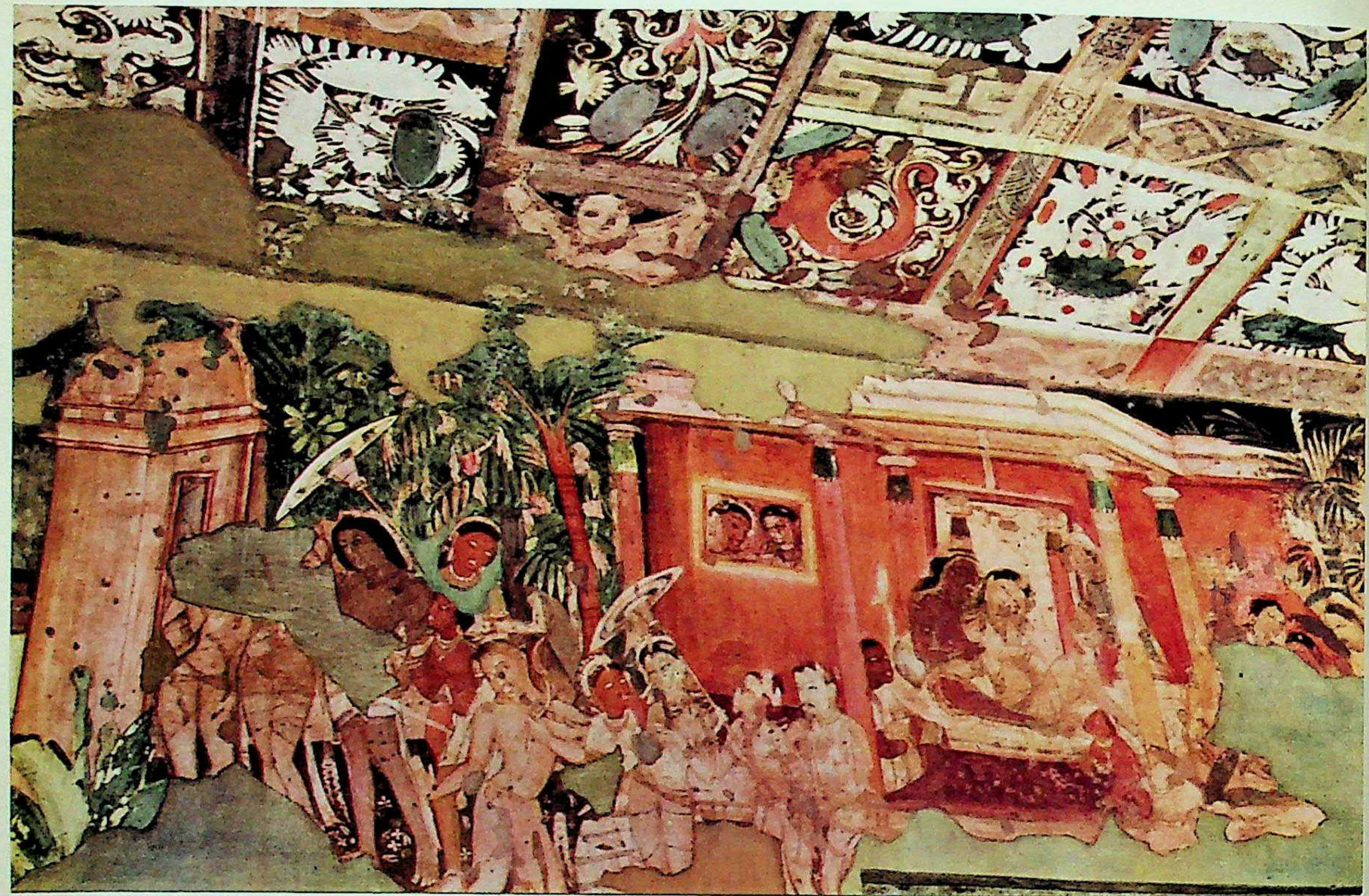
It is in cave XVI, a vihara, that the greatest works in this style survive. They represent one or two Jatakas, and most impressive of all, a series on the life of the Buddha as it is given in a text called the Lalitavistara. One large section deals with the conversion by the Buddha of his brother, Nanda. These pictures are laid out with a strong emphasis on the horizontal and vertical elements of design, so that the wall surface presents a kind of tissue of interlocked rectangles partitioned by walls, pavilions and trees. Figures often appear from behind the walls half length. The slender rounded pillars of the pavilions with their bands of ornament at capital and foot frame and separate scenes of palace life. Bamboos, their leaves individually drawn in a true scale, punctuate the settings with elegant bouquets.

The outlines of the drawings in this cave do suggest the same suave, restrained and rounded plasticity as one finds in the Gupta Buddhist sculpture of Sarnath. The weight of the composition depends on the clear and firm leading of the black contour lines. The colour is rich but still contains no blue. The predominant colour harmony is the deep purple-brown of the flesh set against the greens and pale yellows of clothing, walls and foliage. The colour is thinly aplied as tint, but modelling is achieved by very sparse brushing in of the highlights, especially on the ridges of the nose and eyebrows. From the fact that the lips are often pale, or the same colour as the body one might infer that a fugitive madder had been used for them.

From the extensive but badly damaged compositions on these walls one can only illustrate details out of the great fabric of narrative. Certainly the picture of the cow girl Sujata offering milk to the Buddha just before he takes his seat under the Bodhi tree to achieve enlightenment is a masterpiece of quiet reverence. She has, remarkably, a halo. Her animals behind her, face away towards the next

THE LIONESS LICKING THE FEET OF THE RAJAH — AJANTA — CAVE XVII — EARLY vth CENT





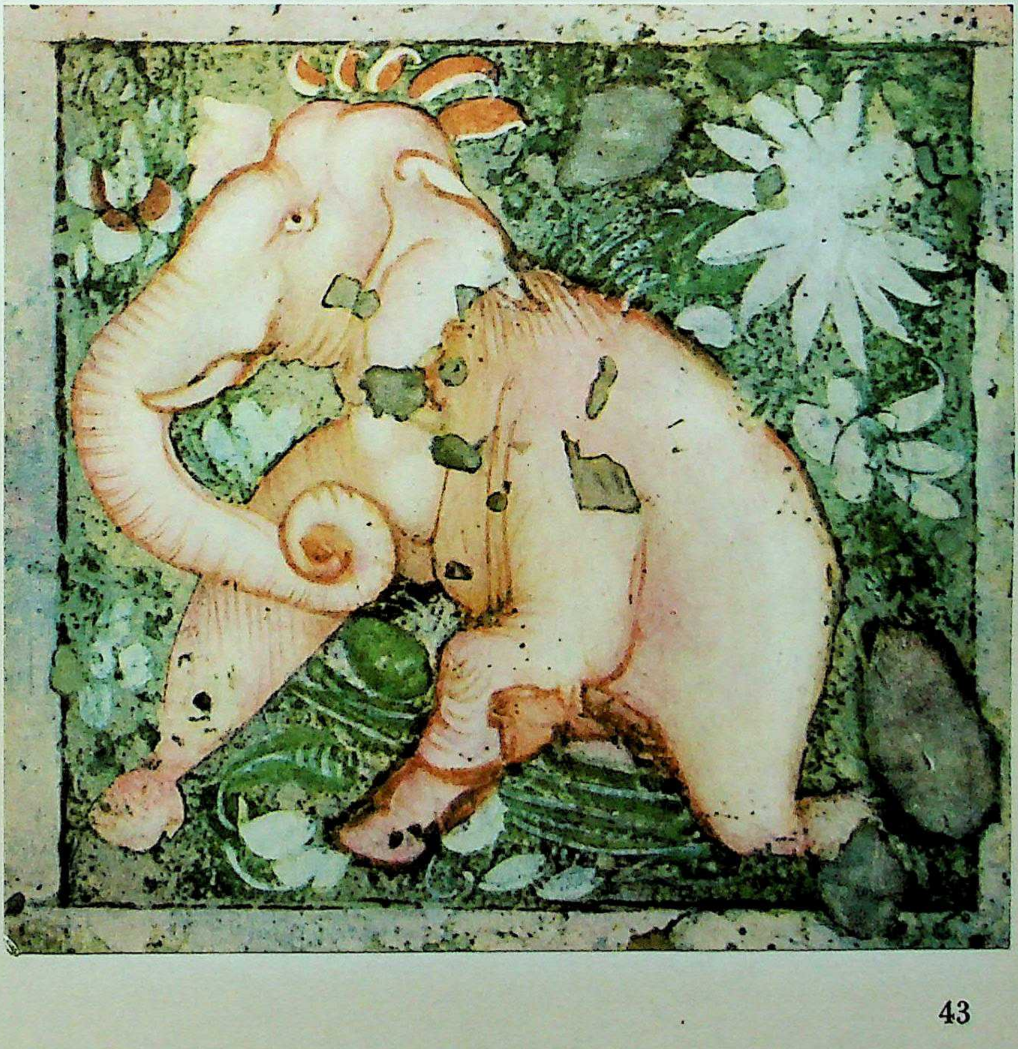
A COURT SCENE — AJANTA — CAVE XVII — LATE vth CENT.

scene on the right, which shows the Buddha actually sitting under the Bodhi tree enduring the temptation of the Lord of Death. Many other scenes from the life of the Buddha are interlinked in a similar way — His birth from his mother's side as she holds a tree in the Lumbini garden; the casting of the horoscope of his birth by the scholar Asita; and the four excursions, when the pampered prince Gautama was brought to a sense of his mission by the gods, who confronted him with the old man, the sick man, the dead man, and the ascetic.

The episode of the Buddha's conversion of his brother Nanda contains perhaps the most famous figure at Ajanta, the fainting Princess. This story tells how Nanda, who was passionately in love with this girl, was tricked away from her by the Buddha, and carried up to heaven. There the Buddha showed him the Apsarases, the heavenly girls, who, like the Houris of the Persian paradise, are there as a reward for those (men of course) who have lived a pious life. Overwhelmed by their beauty, Nanda forgot his earthly love and consented to enter the Buddhist order as a short cut to this heaven. In time he came to see the vanity of his purely sexual aims, and reached the Buddhist goal. But the Princess, his beloved, was cruelly left with no such consolation. Here she is presented to us not so much for the aspect of her suffering, though certainly the economical drawing does suggest her abandonment and despair, as for the sake of illustrating that beauty which ensnared Nanda. The drooping palm frond behind her head suggests a poetic analogy for her drooping beauty.

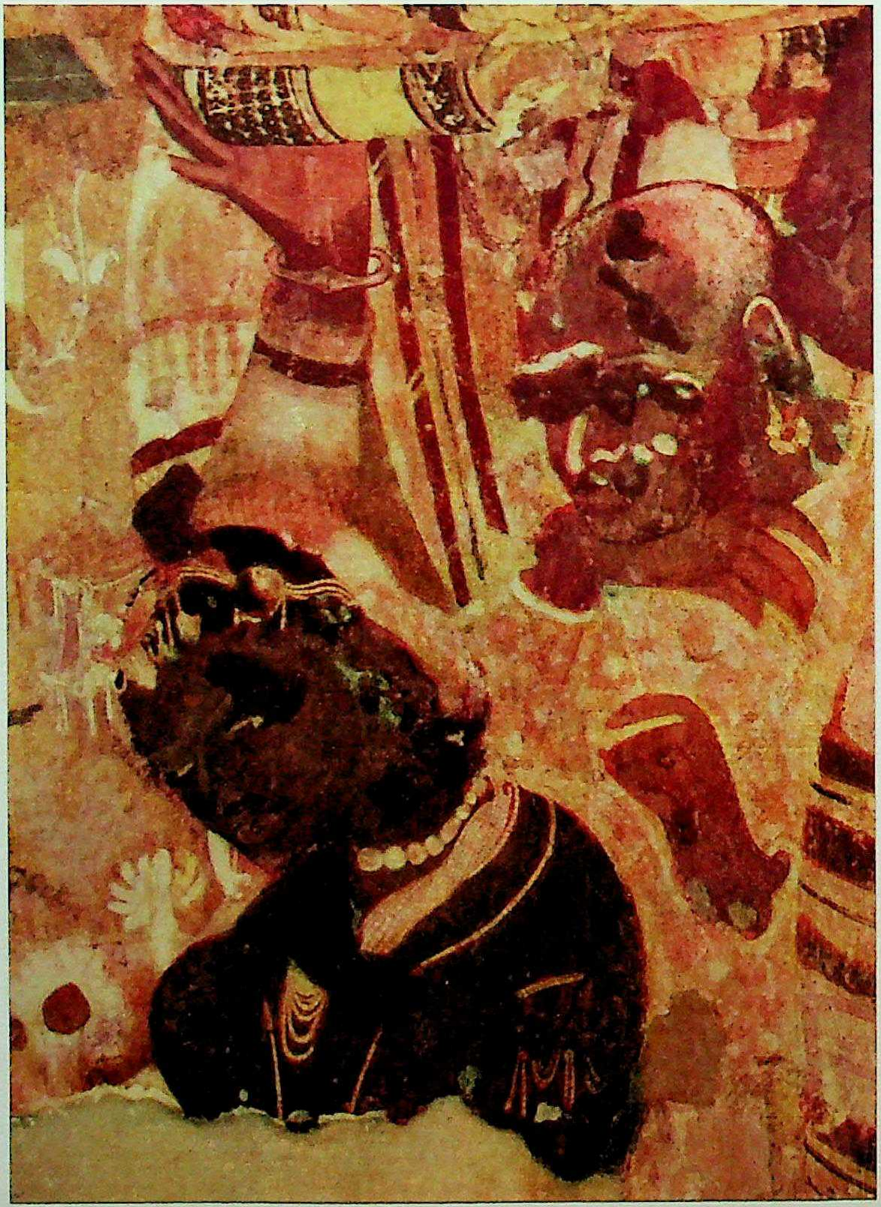
Other cave paintings of the early fifth century depict a variety of subjects. There are, for example, groups of the figures of the "Seven Buddhas". Since the Indian mind has always conceived time on a vast scale, and has never imagined that one single Buddha could have been sufficient for all the successive ages of universes

THE PINK ELEPHANT — AJANTA — CAVE XVII — END vth CENT.

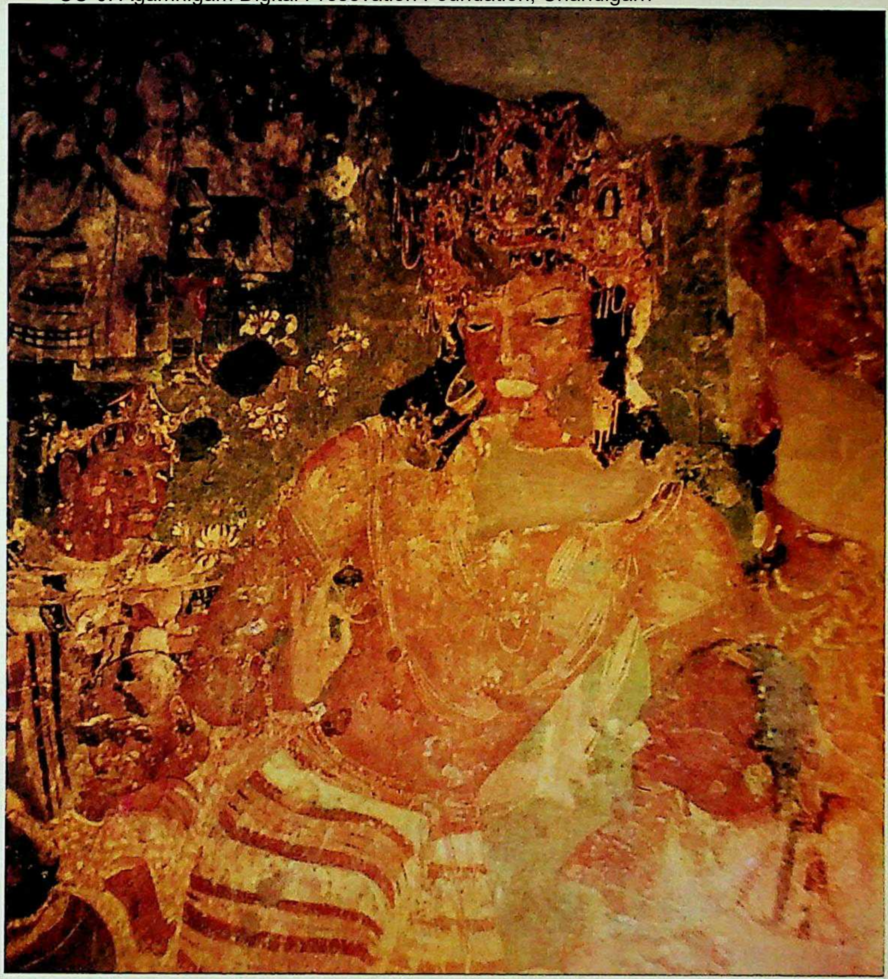


numberless as the Ganges sands, speculative reason demanded that all these be provided with Buddha incarnations. At first the seven Buddhas of this world were recognised, later the millions upon millions of Buddha manifestations in every corner of every universe.

There are iconic figures of the teaching Buddha surrounded by a golden radiance. There is in cave VI one small fresco of a monk, humbly making his offering of a flower at the knee of a huge stone relief of the standing Buddha (plate p. 39).



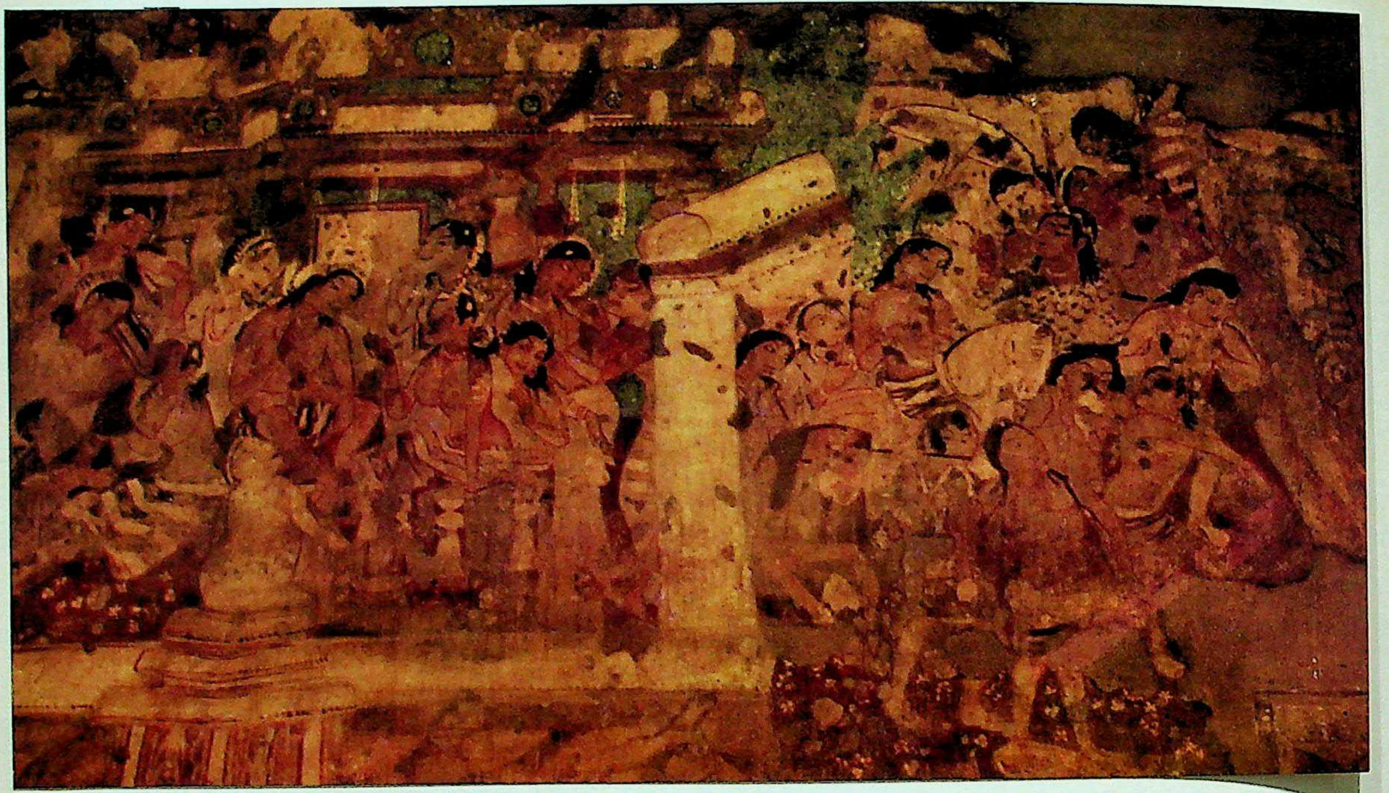
GIRL AND MONK
AJANTA — CAVE I
EARLY VIth CENT.



A BODHISATTVA RECEIVING OFFERINGS
AJANTA — CAVE I MID VIth CENT.

There are flying Apsarases, and in cave XVII an impressive narrative composition very much resembling in style the work in cave XVI, portraying the legend of the Buddha taming a maddened elephant. But here the drawing of the several figures of the elephant is markedly less vigorous and inventive than that of the master of the Shaddanta Jataka in cave X.

The last phase of art of the Vakataka epoch of the late 5th century is represented by the main outlines of some large compositions of Jatakas and the Buddha-life in caves XVI and XVII. Their style is characterised by an extraordinary vividness of touch. The figures are suave, smoothly modelled, and their contours

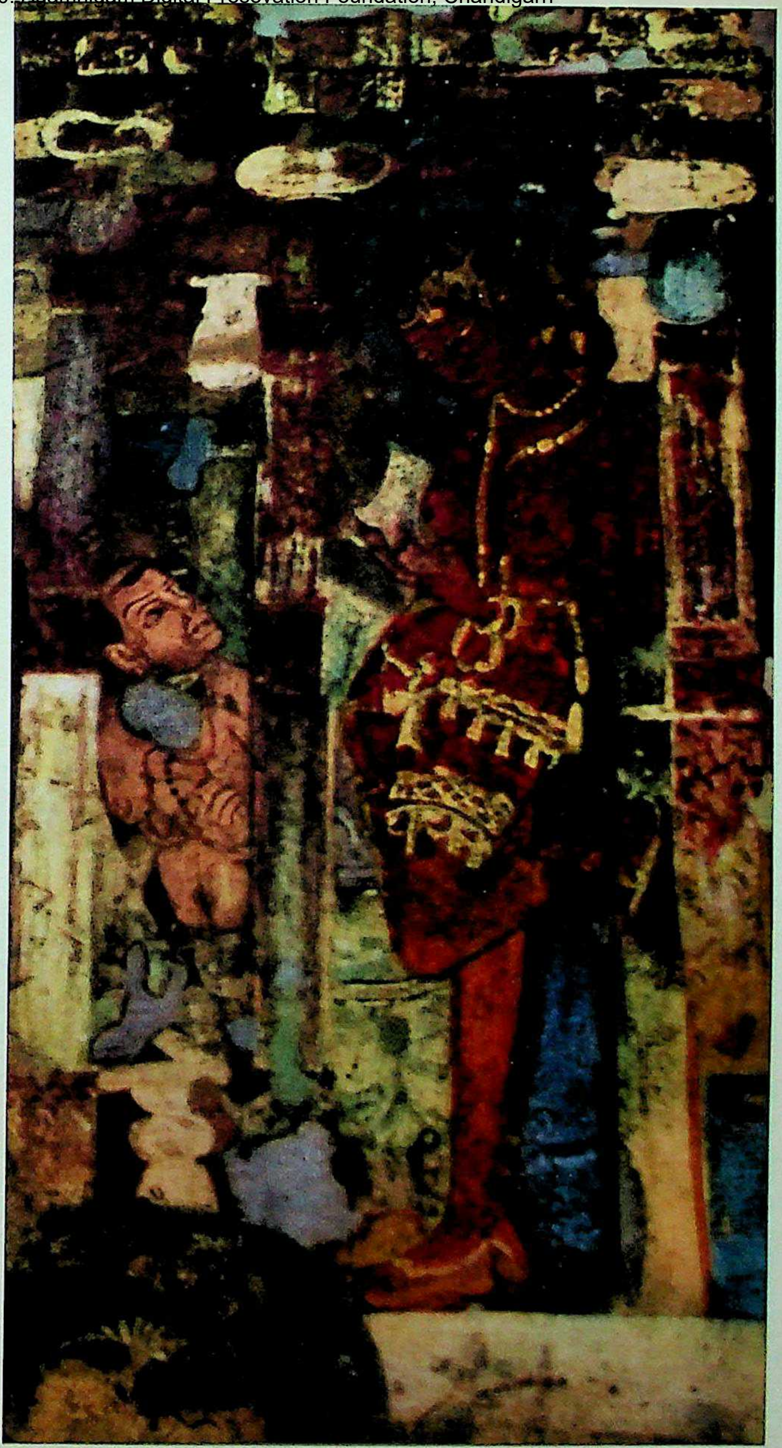


A RAJAH WITH HIS WOMEN ; HE RIDES OUT THROUGH THE PALACE GATE — LATE VII TH C.

have the gentle undulations of the early 5th century; but there are new elements-wealth and refinement in the ornaments, and above all an extraordinary vitality in the painting of trees and foliage. The spatial compostion, with the standing-places of figures ranged above and below to indicate depth, regains something of the feeling for environment that the great painter of cave X displayed. The organisation and distribution of narrative among the trees and pavilions of a palace garden or among the rocky peaks of the heavenly mountains is managed with consummate skill (plate p. 42).

A feature of this and later phases of Ajanta painting is the many smallish figures of the Buddha painted in little compartments on pillars and walls. They seem to have been dedicated by pious individuals who were only able to afford a small contribution. These pictures probably reflect the growth of the characteristic mediaeval idea that the mere act of multiplying images of the Buddha accumulates merit for the person who has them made.

The later painting at Ajanta—by far the larger part of what survives— was done between the mid-6th century and ca. 700, and illustrates the same range of



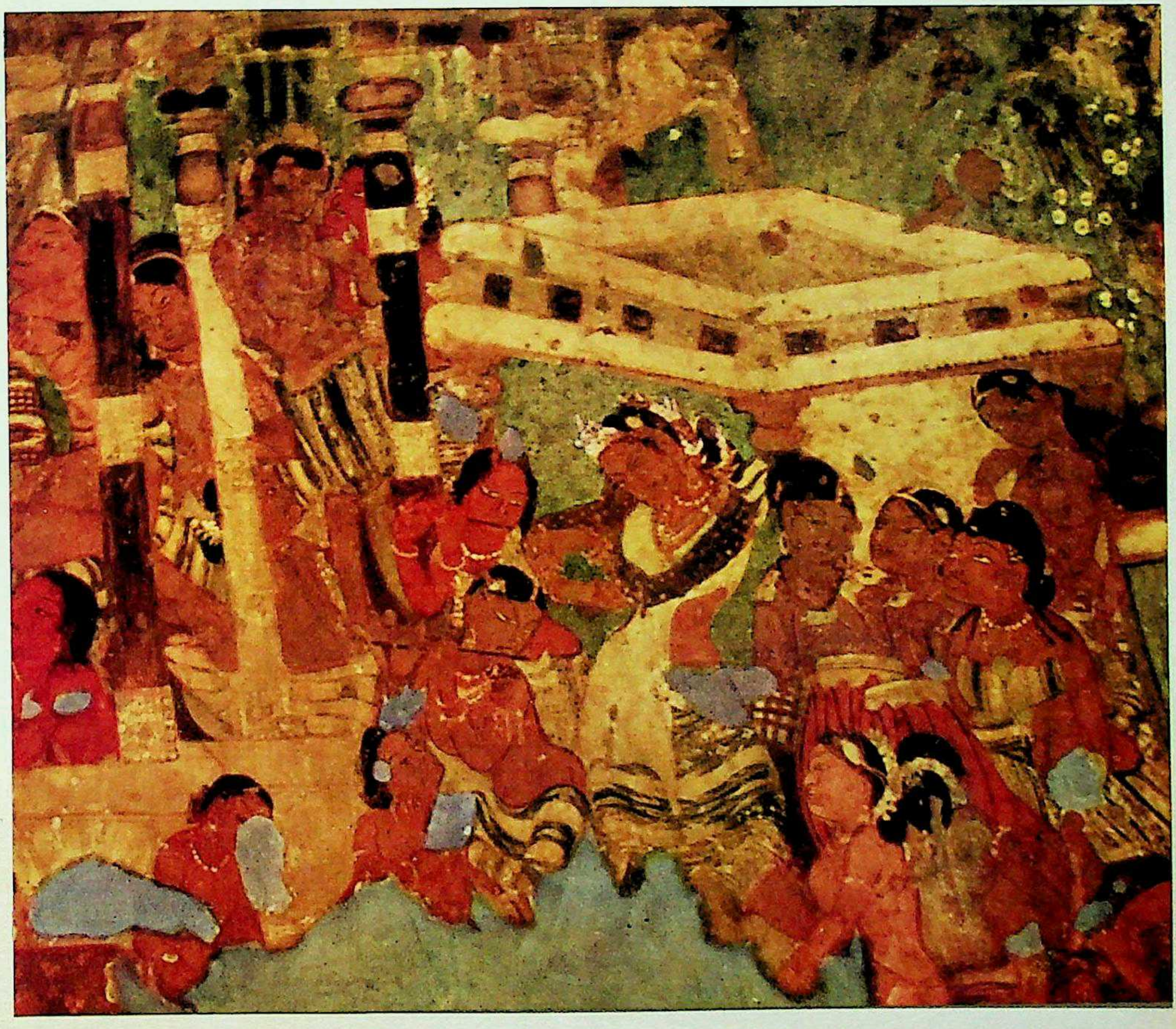
A PRINCESS LEANING AGAINST
A PALACE PILLAR
AJANTA — CAVE II — CA. 600

narrative, the greater Jatakas. It also illustrates that specifically Mahayana text of the life of the Buddha, the Lalitavistara. In addition there appear the famous figures of Bodhisattvas who flank a doorway in cave I (plate p. 45). Bodhisattvas are usually regarded, incorrectly, as peculiar to the Mahayana, the "Great vehicle", the branch of Buddhism that flourished in the northern part of the Buddhist world. Bodhisattvas, who at Ajanta appear in the guise of Kings adorned with the crowns, jewels and fine clothes of paradise, are in one sense the transcendant personae of kings Historically their icons derive from dedicatory stelae of exalted patrons, and kings claimed to be their incarnations. In the highest religious sense they represent fully enlightened beings who yet refuse, out of compassion towards suffering creatures, to pass finally into the ultimate release of Nirvàna. Their universal sympathy is conceived literally. There is no limit to their sense of self, and they regard the universe as cognate with their own body; so that the suffering of the least of creatures if felt by the Bodhisattva as his own. At the same time he is the personification of the true doctrine of the voidness of conditioned reality. He is continually at hand to answer prayers and work in every possible way to help. The later body of paintings also includes a number of purely doctrinal pictures, such as the serried ranks of Buddha manifestations, and schematic groups of the spiritual principles that are characteristic of early mediaeval Buddhism. But even at this time feminine beauty was by no means neglected (plate p. 44).

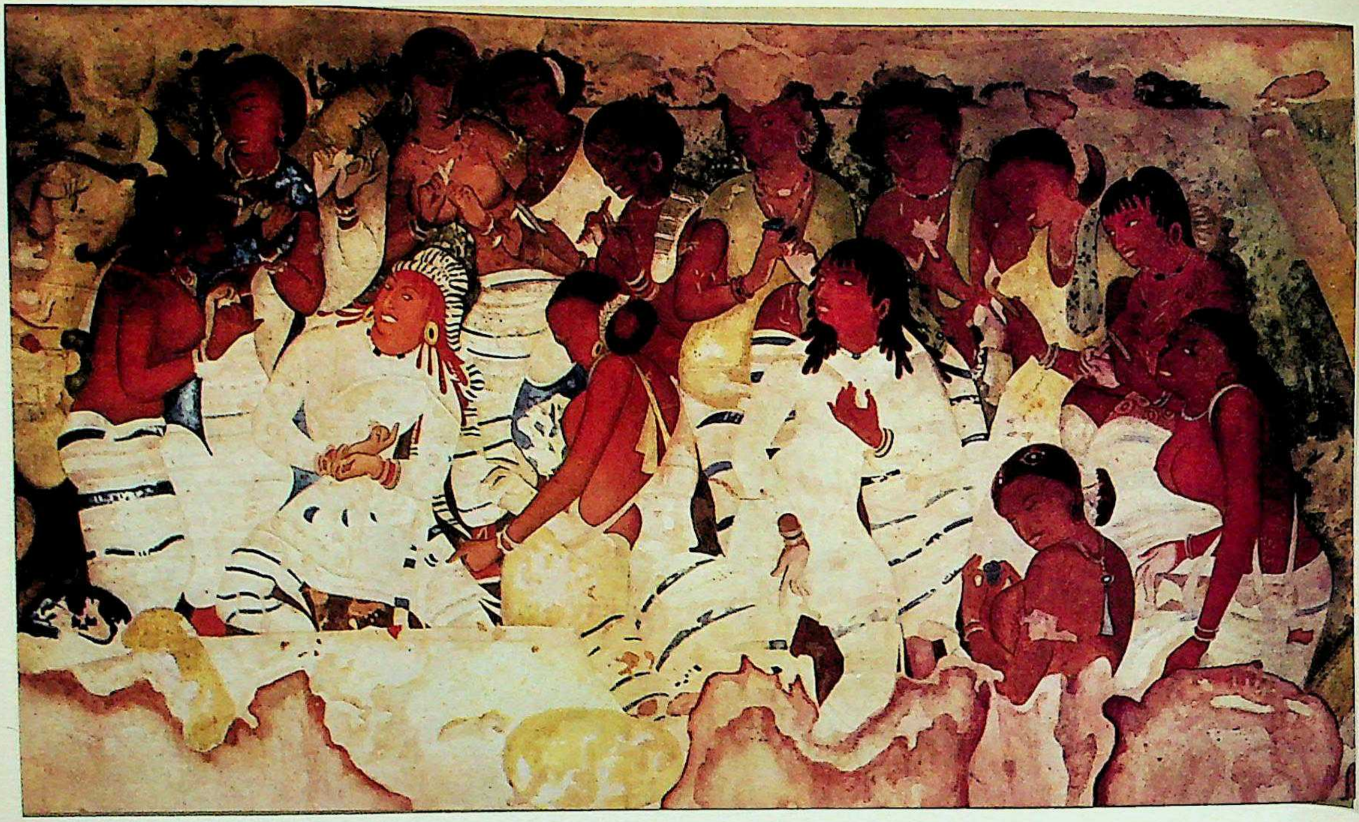
The sequence of dynasties under whom the later paintings at Ajanta were made is not important, as the tradition seems to have continued independant of shifts in patronage. The Vakatakas were succeded by Katachuris and Chalukyas. The evolution of the pictorial style is not easy to follow in an orderly sequence, as so many of the compositions are made up of passages painted at different epochs. Indeed the chief characteristic of all but the latest paintings of this group is their confused composition, in which figures on different scales are mixed together, and boxed compositions of all sorts of sizes are set into the space. Little can thus be said about overall spatial conceptions.

In vihara caves I and II, and XXVI and XVII there is a very great deal of decorative painting. Rows of panels filled with flowers and foliage symbolising the sap of life, with animals and birds and little compositions of figures, some in foreign costumes, some flying celestials among clouds, cover the ceilings and pillars (plate 43). Some are executed in light lines on a dark ground. Most of the 7th century work is in the last three of these caves. In cave II especially are many of the most famous scenes and individual figures at Ajanta, often reproduced in books on Indian art.

The stylistic development during the seventh century leads at first from relative simplicity of drawing towards an elegant and florid execution. The innumerable palace scenes are filled with figures of extravagantly attractive women who play some part, perhaps only a small one, in the narrative. They lean on pillars or idle in seductive poses, and are drawn with great suaveness (plate p. 47). Highly adorned and uniformally idealised they posture theatrically, with elegant feminine gestures, their great round breasts uncovered. The men, however are not always idealised. There are a number of clearly distinguished physical types, and some intention to_express feelings and qualities of character is obvious. One recalls the courtesan



DANCE SCENE — AJANTA — CAVE I — LATE VIIth CENT.



DANCE SCENE — BAGH — A COPY (ORIGINAL CA. 700) — PARIS, MUSÉE GUIMET

with her hall of masculine types mentioned in the Introduction. The faces are drawn with a sure hand, the features marked out by clear black lines that move in deep re-entrant curves and never stiffen into inexpressive arcs. The hair of both men and women is drawn with great life and freedom, in skilfully tousled tresses whose forms are never repetitive.

The plastic modelling as the century wears on becomes less sensitive, and what had earlier been freely invented hardens into routine. The sensuous consciousness of softly rounded forms displayed by the artists before 600, is replaced by a different conception of the outline as a clear pattern of curves and angles laid on the surface, with the modelling reduced to stripes that simply follow the inside of the contour. By the end of the century the whole weight of the invention had come to rest on a swerving and wiry black line, capable vividly of expressing a vigorous but somewhat demonic life; it is linked with bright almost flat colour that takes little account of the volumes of the figures. There are some beautiful compositions in this style, especially the Mahajanaka jataka in cave I (plate p. 46), with its riders and crowds of moving figures, whose abrupt and angular gestures give a sense of general direction and activity, and the famous dancing girl with musicians in a cell of cave I (plate p. 49) whose presence in a Buddhist monastery can only be explained in terms of "decoration" appropriate to a court. It has often been pointed out, quite rightly, that this last phase of painting technique is closely linked with later styles of palm leaf manuscript illumination of the beginning of the second millennium A.D. Many of the Ajanta figure-types, with their pointed features, expressive eyes, and curled tresses of dark hair, seem to lie behind the types of the manuscripts.

BAGH

Two decades ago there still survived in some of the caves of the Buddhist monastery at Bagh remains of wall paintings very closely resembling some of those at Ajanta. Today very little remains. Here I can only illustrate sections from a copy. Again, as at Ajanta, it is practically certain that the whole series of caves —a chaitya with viharas—was once painted throughout. The pictures seem to have been in the Ajanta style of the late sixth and early seventh century A.D. This is not surprising, as Bagh is only some 150 miles from Ajanta.

The chief Bagh fragments represented a royal procession, a magnificent Bodhisattva figure very much the same as those at Ajanta, a pair of weepins ladies, and a group of female musicians and dancers surrounding a man in a curioug fringed and pinked costume, probably the troupe's leader (plate p. 50). This last group probably represents a typical Indian institution surviving even today—a troupe of travelling musicians and actors giving their performance at some festival. From such troupes, who penetrated into Iran and through the middle east, are descended the Gypsies of the west.

The only other remains of Buddhist painting in India are some tiny fragments, with a few complete panels of ornamental figures on a small scale, in the Buddhist caves of Aurangabad. These are famous for their superb sculptures, and the big carved stone dance-scene in cave VII. The remains date probably from the end of the 7th century.

BUDDHIST PAINTING AND THE FAR EAST

During the second century A.D. in the far north-west of India, the region embracing Kabul and the upper Indus river known in antiquity as Gandhara, a school of art began to flourish. The Kushan dynasty, who then ruled that part of India, had enormously enriched themselves and their merchants by skilful diplomacy that gave them command of the trade routes across Asia to the Roman west. The flood of trade that passed through their kingdom, mostly westwards to Rome itself, yielded enormous revenue, partly in the form of tolls, much of which was spent on building and decorating Buddhist monasteries. Along these trade-routes a powerful influence from the art of the Eastern Roman Empire, from Alexandria and Syria, entered Gandhara. It is even probable that artists themselves came east to take advantage of the demand for their services. It is certainly true that by the mid-second century the florid ornament of the Gandharan monasteries was full of putti with garlands, Corinthian acanthus capitals, Mediterranean torsos, Hellenistic city goddesses, and figures draped in heavy togas. Even the Gandharan Buddha figure is closely related to the portrait statue of the early Roman empire. As the centuries wore on this art-style developed, and travelled eastwards along the trade routes of Central Asia in the wake of Buddhism into China. At many places along the roads, at Bamiyan, in Khotan, at Miran, Dandin Olik and many other oasis cities, great Buddhist monasteries sprang up ornamented in a style derived directly from that of Gandhara. By the fifth century Buddhist cave temples were being excavated in China, and from these early centres Buddhism and Buddhist art were carried into every corner of China, Mongolia, Korea and Japan. Thus the artistic style underlying the early Buddhist art of all these countries is Gandharan. After the Hun invasions in the fifth century, the culture of Gandhara itself died out, surviving only in a few places, and in the more remote regions of Central Asia.

All the sculpture of the Gandharan and Central Asian monasteries was once painted. There must certainly have been mural painting in the monasteries of Gandhara; but none now survives. At Bamiyan in Afghanistan, however, and at many of the Central Asian sites, have been found the remains of Buddhist painting on plaster and wooden boards illustrating Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, attendant deities and decorative motives. The art these remains represent inspired the Buddhist painting of the whole Far East. It must have been largely derived from Gandharan painting, and it is a vast and most fascinating subject for study. It is not, however, Indian. Too many extraneous factors have gone into its composition. So it does not fall within the scope of this book, though it is impossible to pass it by without giving some indication of its importance.

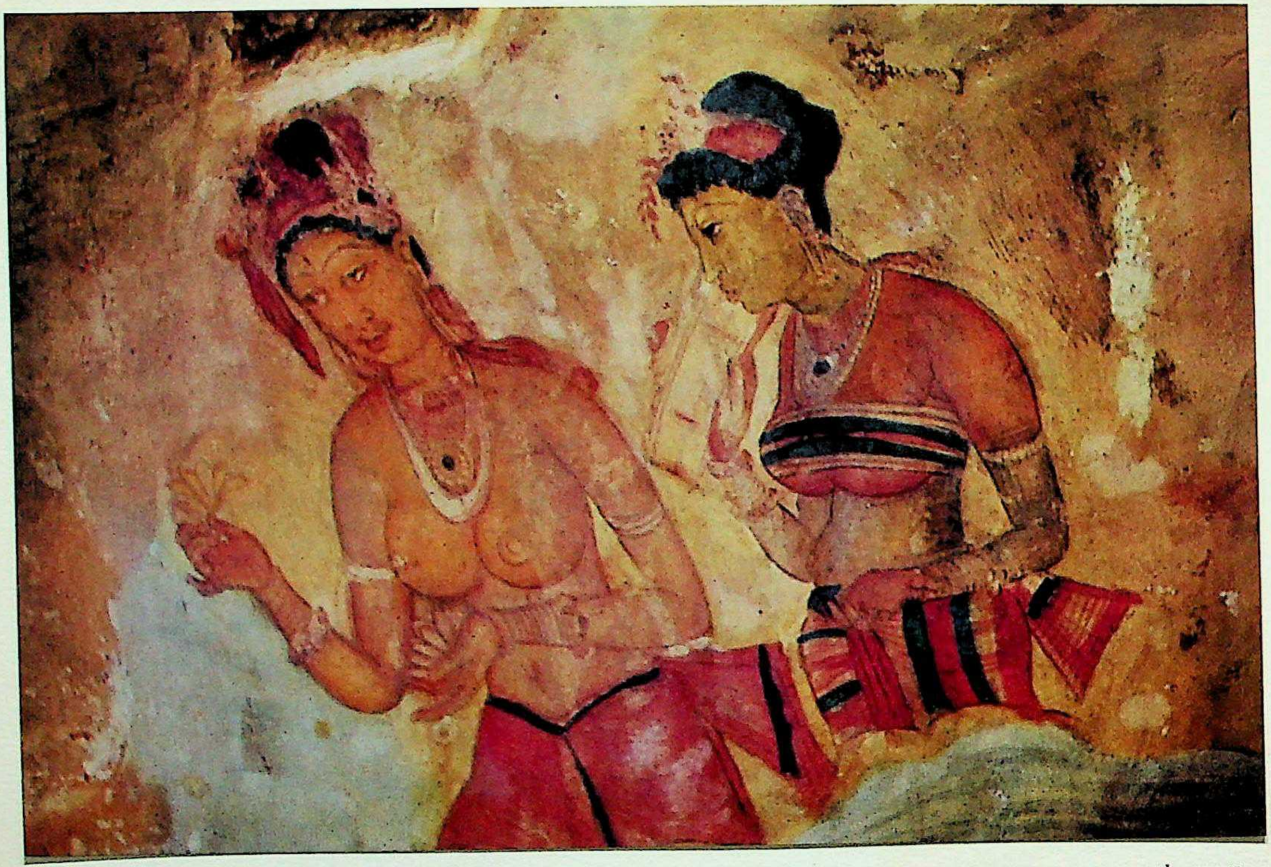
EARLY WALL PAINTINGS IN CEYLON

Since the third century B.C., when the Buddhist emperor Ashoka sent thither a mission—which included painters—with a cutting of the Bodhi tree itself and a tooth relic of the Buddha, Ceylon has been fundamentally a Buddhist country. Ceylonese religious art has always thus been largely Buddhist. From documentary evidence and the few surviving fragments it is clear that as in India, painting once existed in huge quantities in Ceylon. The archaeological remains of Buddhist stupas and monasteries scatter the paradisaical countryside. At the immense ancient city of Anuradhapura, where the island's capital was till the eighth century and at Polonnaruwa, where it was then transported, there are extremely large and impressive Buddhist monuments. Near Kandy, which became the capital in the 13th century there are more recent buildings adorned with painting in a characteristic style which has remained alive down to the present day. For Ceylon is still overwhelmingly Buddhist. Some of the greatest works of art in Ceylon, like the colossal 11th century cliff carving near Polonnaruwa of the dying Buddha with his faithful disciple Ananda standing by with folded arms, are world famous, and rank as major masterpieces of all time. Amongst these are the rock paintings at Sihagiri.

SIHAGIRI

Sihagiri is a huge rock rearing some 600 feet out of the countryside in the District of Matale. Here a parricide king, Kassapa I (circa 473-491 A.D.) built himself a palace-fortress. At the base were gardens, and a town, at the summit the palace where the king could feel himself safe from his enemies. A pathway, hugging the sheer face of the rock, climbs the northern and western faces. Halfway up is a plateau on which stands the forepart of a colossal seated lion, constructed of bricks. This is the lion that gives the rock, Sihagiri "lion rock", its name. A flight of steps between the paws of this colossus forms part of the pathway.

The path was protected on the outside with a brick wall whose surface was coated with fine lime plaster so highly polished that even today one can still see one's reflection it. Beyond the lion, where the path runs round onto the western face of the rock are the paintings. They are on plaster, which lines the inner surface of a rock-pocket about forty feet above the surface of the pathway. It is practically certain that these paintings are the remains of an extensive scheme of decoration

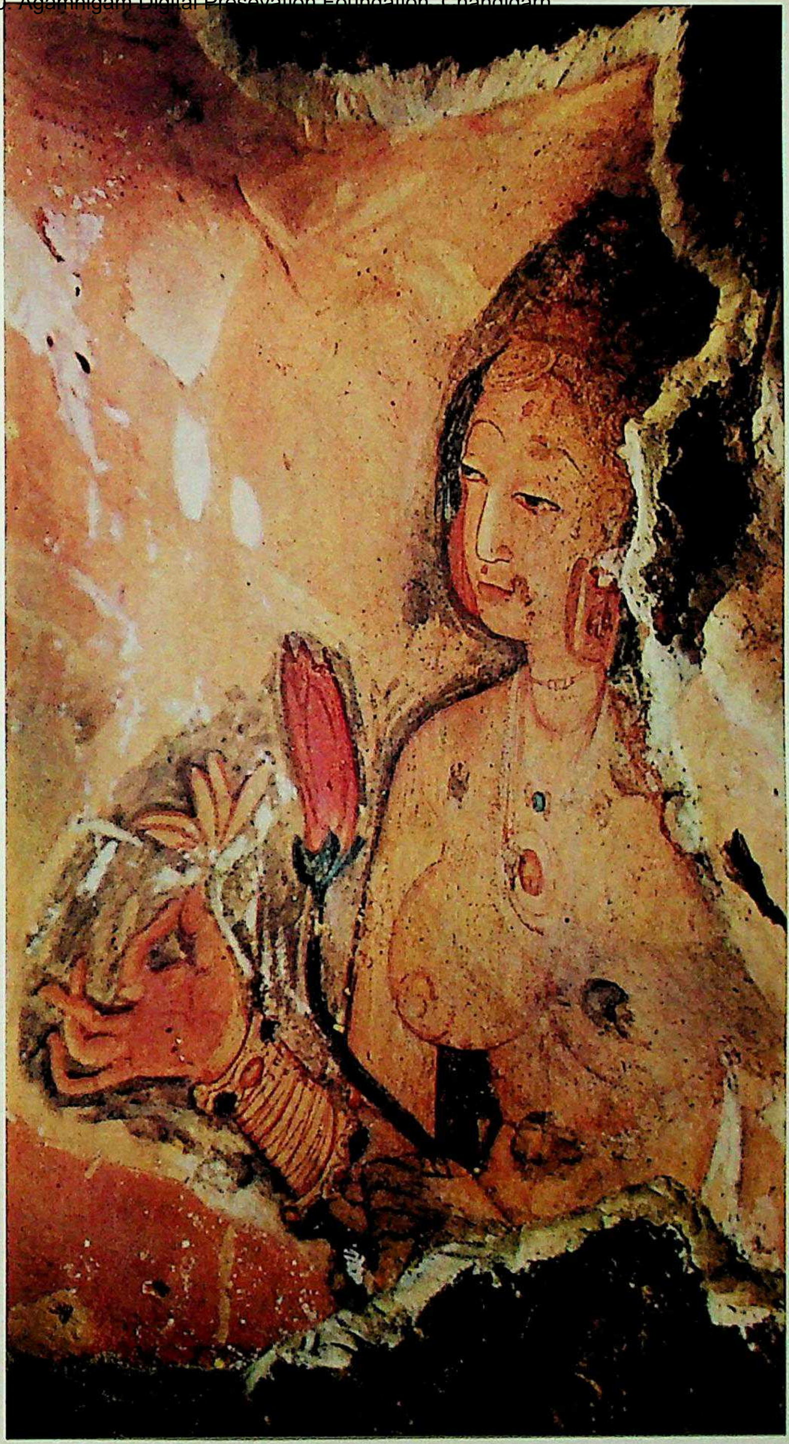


A HEAVENLY DAMSEL WITH HER MAID — SIHAGIRI, CEYLON — LATE vth CENT.

which once covered the whole face of the rock above the pathway. They have survived because of their sheltered position in the rock pocket.

The remaining paintings all represent female figures, with tiny waists and huge sensual breasts, cut off just below their exuberant hips by cloud shapes. Most are in pairs, clearly each a "lady" and her "maid" (plate p. 54); some carry bowls containing flowers, others single flowers or bunches by the stems. They thus represent offering bearers, not human but celestial. In fact they must represent some of those same heavenly apsarases who bewildered the sight of Nanda, and led him to desert his mistress for the religious life. The reason for their presence on the rock is not far to seek. They were there to flatter the transcendant vanity of a king. In many Indian works of art some great being is shown surrounded by troops of flying celestials, who arrive bearing offerings. Here, a whole rock face once bore images of these divinely beautiful inhabitants of the heavens bearing their tribute to the occupant of the glistening palace at the summit.

The technique of these paintings is similar to that at Ajanta, a gum-tempera, painted on a finished lime surface. But as to their date there is very little agreement



A HEAVENLY FIGURE
SIHAGIRI, CEYLON
LATE Vth CENT.

and no historical evidence. The palace citadel was probably occupied until 1155 A.D. so there is plenty of room for speculation. Some people believe that the founder King Kassapa had the paintings made, others that they are partly at least much later work. In style they are indeed near to the late 5 th century work at Ajanta.

The preliminary drawing was cut into the surface of the plaster ; then in light strokes of red the main plastic masses were indicated. Next, the colours of the main areas were laid on with broad stokes that are scarcely visible, but nevertheless emphasise the rotundity of the forms. Some slight modelling from the contour, like that at Ajanta, was used. The flowers the women carry, those they wear in their hair, the hair itself and their elaborate jewelled ornaments were drawn freely and directly in colour. Finally the contours were emphasised with black, and the expression of eyes, lips and hand given point and clarity. Especially interesting is the way in which it is possible to see in successive corrections of the drawing visible through the layers of paint how the artists altered the inclination of a profile, the sweep of a shoulder or the gesture of a hand, as the work developed.

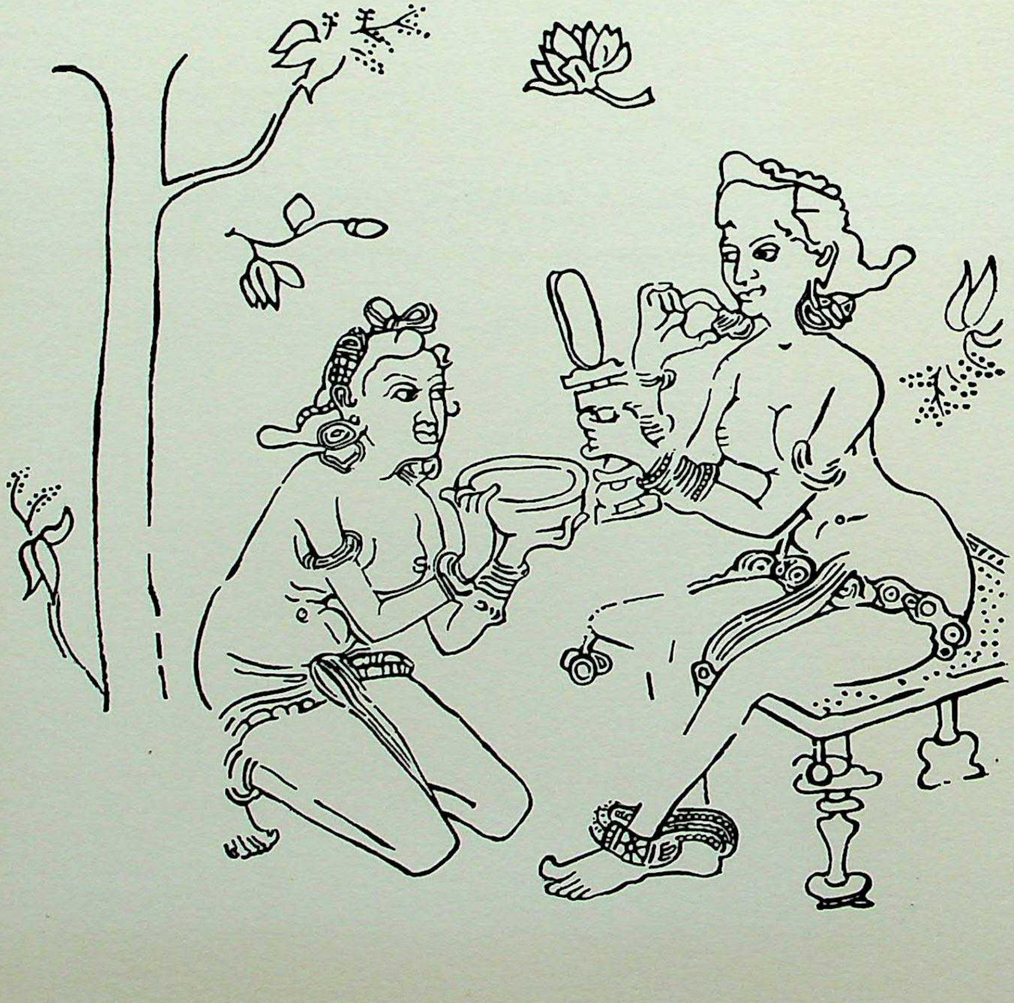
The drawing is, like that of all Indian mural painting, based on lines. But at Sihagiri the lines are sweeping and deeply curved, so that their embraced content of rounded form can almost be felt in the hand. And yet the firm extension of these lines across the surface of the plaster forbids the eye to take the figures as merely solid. There is a deliberate conflict or tension between the two aspects of the drawing, the plastic and the linear, each of which is developed to a very high degree to produce an overwhelming aesthetic effect. The mouths are drawn with the large and beautiful petal-like lower lips so much admired in India, and the glance of the eyes is given direction by a downward undulation in the arch of the eyelid. The hands especially are deeply and elegantly expressive, somewhat affected in their gestures but with fingers alive like serpents (plate p. 55). Beneath their heavy breasts the stomachs of the women show the two or three creases that are canonical attributes of feminine beauty. Their hair is piled up in elaborate and fantastic chignons woven in with flowers, with jewelled tiaras, strings of pearls and threads of gold. On their necks and arms they wear a great varity of jewellery. All these characteristics emphasise the decorative and sensuous idealism.

The colours used are virtually the same as those used at Ajanta in the later fifth century, earth reds, greens and yellows; but including a copper blue in place of the lapis lazuli blue of the post-5th century Ajanta. The bodies of the "ladies" as distinct from the "maids" are always of the light colour of ripe corn, the "Aryan" colour, admired all over India as a mark of exalted birth. Many of the"maids" have dark greenish skins, although in point of beauty they yield nothing to their social superiors. Ladies and maids alike wear a dhoti tied round their hips in typical Indian fashion and although the upper parts of their bodies are all clearly visible, many of them are meant to be wearing a reddish bodice or blouse of that transparent, finely woven cotton muslin which was one of the most prized products of Indian weavers.

Scratched into the plaster of the "mirror-wall" guarding the pathway up the western face of Sihagiri rock are a large number of graffiti, some dating back to the eighth century. In poetical stanzas the wall scribblers — amongst them Buddhist monks — wondered who these divine beauties were. We deduce from the way in which the poems refer to figures which "can be touched by the hand" that once the pictures covered the whole rock down to the level of the pathway. Many of the writers declare that the lily-coloured ones, the golden deer-eyed beauties who bewilder the mind look just as if they are about to speak, but never do. The cruel beauty of these celestial beings with fluttering eyes and flowers combed into their hair has turned the hearts of some away from their homely wives, and destroyed their sleep. A woman writes that she is glad to find that her glamorous rivals have hearts of stone. One poet asserts that the five hundred girls with their gentle smiles retard the progress of him who is going to heaven. But another estatically claims that now his mind is calmed by the beautiful girls, and that having seen them, death does not perturb him. Altogether these hundreds of brief inscriptions give a revealing glimpse of the attudes of generations of ordinary sightseers towards a great monument of art.

HINDAGALA

There is a fragment of tempera wall plainting in a style closely resembling that of the Bagh paintings that survives in Ceylon. This is a plastered area, about seven feet by five, in the cave of the Buddhist temple of Hindagala. It contains two large figures of the Buddha, and several subsidiary groups of smaller figures. Precisely what these scenes illustrate is not at all clear. It has been suggested that they represent the Buddha receiving alms from the merchants Tapassu and Bhalluka and the Buddha preaching in the Tushita heaven. There is a large enigmatic figure, either a divine being or a Bodhisattva, represented by the knee of the preaching Buddha. Here again the colours are once more the earth colours with copper blue.



MEDIAEVAL WALL PAINTING IN INDIA AND CEYLON

THE series of mediaeval paintings that remain to us in India are found chiefly on a few temples, most of them monuments of the Hindu faith. Hinduism is not easy to grasp or to describe. It is vast and sprawling compendium of many beliefs, practises, legends and social customs which have been cemented together by certain unifying factors. The basis of the whole structure is the readiness of ordinary Indians to recognise and reverence spiritual powers wherever they may be found, not only in the accepted and canonical emblems of sanctity, but anywhere. For the Indian his countryside is populated with spirits, many of them evil, some good; but far the greater number of them are, like human beings, a mixture of the two. The tree spirit or the deity of the pond may be angry or pleased with men. He can be propitiated with simple offerings. As one walks by the Yaksha's tree on the way to work one can drop at its foot a handful of flowers or a little ball of squeezed rice, so that things will go well. In the Buddhist legend of the life of the Buddha that we have mentioned before, the milkmaid Sujata gave to the Buddha a sustaining bowl of milk food as he sat by the Bodhi tree before his enlightenment. The story suggests that Sujata believed the wild, emaciated figure of the ascetic Buddha to be the Yaksha of the tree, and the gift of food was her offering. No Indian would really be surprised to meet a deity face to face. And even today saintly men are widely revered as divine incarnations.

From humble beginnings a spirit-haunted spot marked by a tree, a stone, or an anthill may, by a series of stages develop into a shrine. The village people may find that their offerings bear fruit. Saucers of milk and rice offered at a snake-hole, say, or garlands hung on a tree may prompt the resident deity to grant the prayers that go with the offering. A woman may give birth to her long-desired son, a young man recover from a disease usually fatal. So the prestige of the "deity" may increase and his fame begin to spread. Some villager better off than the others may have a flat altar stone placed at the spot to receive the offerings. A richer man may have a fence built to keep wandering cattle away. Inscribed and carved stones may be set up with dedictory or commemorative inscriptions. Perhaps in the end, if its fame becomes sufficiently great, the hallows, whatever it is, will become the focus of a temple built around it and rich men or princes will donate villages to its support. Some of India's most respected Hindu temples at the present day contain in their holy of holies the stump of an ancient tree, or the ruined pile of an anthill. Perhaps, too, if the deity of the hallows has a local name, and attains sufficient prestige, he may force himself into the attention of the Brahmins and enter their recognised pantheon, thus earning his place in legend. There are many historical cases of this, from Krishna to Manasa and Chandi.

The Brahmins! By their own reckoning they have always been the crowning glory of Hindu society, living receptacles of the divine power whom it is society's special responsibility to support, feed and clothe. They are the arbitors of orthodoxy and by birth destined to the highest priestly calling. Their religious role, in the formation and preservation of the Hindu religion has been of the greatest importance. They and their tradition embodied in the enormous bulk of Sanskrit literature have provided the cement which has bonded together the multifarious religious customs of India's various peoples into what we now call "Hinduism". They have penetrated and settled in nearly every part of India, and taken over the chief role in whatever local rituals were followed. One particular ceremony, the marriage ceremony, they have succeeded virtually in standardising over the whole of India. Generally, however, they have been content to rationalise local customs and allot them a place in their own scheme of things. This, needless to say, has been an elastic one.

The basis of the Brahmin's culture is his capacity for memorising certain sacred texts in the Sanskrit language. Amongst the many there are, of course, some learned Brahmins and a majority who are practically illiterate. But the Brahmin's chief raison d'etre is as a walking encyclopedia of sacred knowledge and literature. The fundamental texts of the Brahmin tradition are the Vedas, collections of hyms, mostly addressed to ancient deities, composed during the first millennium B.C. in an archaic Sanskrit with a very elaborate grammar, a language that was perhaps never actually spoken. These hymns supplied the liturgical material used by the Brahmins in the very elaborate system of sacrifices they performed on behalf of patrons desiring wealth, progeny or health. The gifts of these patrons supplied the Brahmins with their basic livelihood. The texts, together with a large body of explanatory and speculative material (the Brahmanas and Upanishads) were handed down from teacher to pupil by verbal memorising alone. Partly because of the fidelity with which they handed down the letter of those texts, generation after generation, in the course of time the literature became incomprehensible even to scholars who were proficient in the more simplified Sanskrit that by the second century A.D. was becoming the lingua franca of the literate and intellectual classes of Hindu Society in Northern India. As a consequence a science of grammar and linguistics grew up, expressly for the purpose of interpreting the ancient texts.

By reason of their fundamental training the intellectual curiosity of |the Brahmins was often great. As well as fulfilling their priestly functions they served royal courts and society at large as lawyers, political advisers, even as military strategists. They were philosophers, mathematicians and astronomers. Their literary leanings led many of them to become poets, and, most important from our point of view, collectors of legends. In the two great epics of ancient India, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, and in many long Sanskrit compilations known as Puranas are collected a vast number of legends concerning the gods, saints and heroes of Hinduism.

These works are monuments of Brahmin syncretic activity. It is obvious that many of the hundreds of stories and episodes recorded in them must have originated at the popular level. And some of their protagonists may not originally have borne the same names as they do now. But the encyclopaedic Brahmin mind has been at work, co-ordinating and transforming the material, focussing it around the figures of a few major deities. By means of a particular ingenious concept it was able to assimilate intractable myths. This concept is "Manifestation". The major deities of the Brahmanical system are described as "manifesting" themselves in many different guises under various names so that the can play the leading roles in all sort of different stories. From this has arisen the typically Hindu view of their divinities as multiform beings which is so bewildering to the Westerner. All the manifestations of a god are different, yet the same. Essence and quality are combined. The transcendant becomes fully contingent; the timeless moves in time; characteristics are not exclusive. Siva is the great Yogi, patron of all ascetics, yet one of the most familiar Indian legends deals with his marriage to the beautiful Parvati; in the guise of a beautiful boy he seduces the wives of forest-dwelling ascetics. Parvati is Gauri, who is Kali, who is Chamunda, who is Durga. Iconographically the forms of the goddess may be distinguished, but essentially the deity is one. To complicate the situation still further, sectarian preferences arose; the chosen deity was often represented as the Supreme Person and other deities were allotted humble roles. Derogatory tales revealed their transcendental inadequacy in the face of the preferred god — usually Vishnu or Shiva. One such story, for example, tells how Brahma and Visnu in heaven were disputing which was greater, when Shiva appeared beside them in the form of a colossal radiant phallus, the two ends of which the other two gods could not fathom, try as they might.

The great Puranic compendia seem to have been compiled during the early middle ages in India, from about the fifth century A.D. onwards. During the same epoch the Hindu temple underwent a great architectural development. From a single cell with a portico (5th c. A.D.) it evolved into a structure of elaborate plan and elevations, bearing much relief sculpture and painting based on the Puranic legends. It is probable that when the deity of some modest local shrine, such as I have described, qualified by his prestige for serious Brahmin attention, his legend or at least his *numen*, was deliberately synthesised with that of a greater deity. The temple itself became not merely a shelter for a sacred object, but by virtue of the artistic representations of divine legend that adorn it, a repositary itself of the divine. In this connexion Verrier Elwin collected a splendid statement from a tribesman concerning the ritual paintings his people make on the walls of their houses. He said that when the painting is done the deity comes and sits like a fly in the picture. By an extension of this idea we can come nearer to understanding the role of art in Hinduism; its presence attracts the divine. A painting or sculpture is like an excavated channel into which the energy of the transcendant, like water, must flow. And one cannot expect divinity to be pleased to enter any but the most suitable abode, the most beautiful artistic forms. Here emerges one of the most potent causes of the Indian pursuit of artistic idealism.

The earliest Hindu temples were probably made of wood. The earliest example of the type we know, oddly enough, is Buddhist; but there can be no mistaking the fact that this little stone shrine, on the hill at Sanchi not far from the famous stupas, belongs genuinely to the line of development of the Hindu temple. It is severely rectilinear, with cubical volumes; the cell has a shallow porch supported on pillars that are massive out of all proportion to the weight of the flat roof they have to carry. It may well be that the rock-cut cave-cell, whose pillars needed to be massive, served as the original pattern for this sort of dressed stone architecture.

In fact, the distinction betwen Buddhism and Hinduism which is so clear to us when we read the literature, was not nearly so hard and fast in the minds of the Indian people during the centuries when Buddhism survived in India. Buddhism existed against a background of daily life shared with Hinduism. Buddhist monks had a special culture of their own. But the Buddhist laity, on whose good will they depended, still lived lives almost exactly similar to those of all other Indians. They too paid reverence to the numinous in the countryside around them. They made their offerings to the Yakshas and Nagas like their "Hindu" fellows. Statues of these deities, massive and magnificent, were made in stone between the third century B.C. and the first century A.D. probably for famous country shrines. The Buddhists incorporated such carvings of them into the decorative schemes of their stupas, using them as door-guardians, for example. The intention was clearly to emphasise the status of the Buddha and Buddhist truth by employing the familiar local deities as mere courtiers and attendants on the greater Principle. But to the people they still retained their importance, and many a Buddhist stupa was surrounded by shrines where simple folk could pay their respects to Yakshas or Nagas by the time-honoured custom of offerings. A beautiful 2nd c. A.D. figure of a female serpent goddess from such a shrine, carved in the stone and style of Mathurà, survives at Sanchi. It is much eroded and damaged; and the fingers of generations of devotees have worn a huge touch hole in the region of her vulva. Certainly she was adored by supposedly Buddhist worshippers for several centuries.

One can hardly be surprised that during the second to fifth centuries A.D. Buddhism also evolved its own icons of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to serve as repositaries of the specifically Buddhist numen in response to the demands of popular religion. It is also hardly surprising that Buddhism did not in fact survive intact in India. For the very bases of popular belief and custom favoured the growth of Hindu forms of religion, and the Buddhists, who to the people no doubt looked like just another sort of Brahmins, following just another of the many intellectual Brahmin traditions, were fighting a losing battle against superstition. Every concession they made to popular belief was a nail in their own coffin. The Brahmins, on the other hand, accepted and carefully fostered a belief in the gods, in all sorts and conditions of gods, from the greatest transcendant personages like Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma, through the ranks of popular deities like Ganesha, the elephant headed "son" of Shiva and Parvati, and Jagaddhatri, Bengal's own form the goddess, to the hundreds of humbler inhabitants of the heavens, the Apsarases whom we have met before, the Kinnaras, Gandharvas, Nagas and teeming Ganas. When the Hindu temple attained its most magnificent development during the middle ages, these minor deities effloresced on the fabric in sculpture and painting by their thousands. They fill the backgrounds of hundreds of representations of Puranic narratives, and a few are distinguished by being alloted quite important roles in the cardinal incidents of Hindu mythology. The serpent King, the Naga Vasuki, for example, was used as a churning-rope by the gods when the Cosmic Ocean was churned, with the cosmic mountain Meru as churning-stick, to churn out the poison and nectar of immortality.

The evolution of the Hindu temple was partly conditioned by the important role decorative carving and painting played. By successive stages, and in different parts of India at different times were added: masonry piles, spires or sikharas, above the cell; peristylar ambulatories around both portico and cell, whose pillars bore carved and painted figures; halls, and aligned pavilions, full of decorated columns; perimeter walls and gateway towers. Flat wall areas were reserved for elaborate representations of the most important events of Hindu mythology. The plans, generally aligned, but sometimes cruciform, all centred about the main cell, the garbha-griha or womb-house, where the most sacred icon of the whole temple, the main fount of its sanctity, was enshrined. This the vulgar could only glimpse if they were lucky. Brahmins alone had access to it, attending it, sweeping the cell, washing it, anointing it with melted butter, and hanging it with garlands of flowers. Occasionally subsidiary images on the temple fabric were accorded similar attention if they had gained some sort of special prestige by prowess in the answering of prayers.

The central icon in the garbha-griha was sometimes anthropomorphic, representing one of the major gods or goddesses, according to the sectarian leanings of the Brahmins and local people. Most commonly it was a lingam of stone or wood, a stylised phallic emblem, sacred to Shiva. Occasionally, as I have mentioned, an ancient tree stump or ant-hill occupied the garbha-griha. Sometimes it was itself interpreted as a lingam. Sometimes it shared the cell with a lingam or an image. But although many temples grew, as it were naturally, upon some sacred spot, many others were founded by the consciously willed act of an individual or a group of people, who were prepared to pay for and endow the structure. It then devolved upon the artists to prepare a suitable home for the divine, and upon the Brahmins by their ceremonies to draw the divine down to take up residence in the home prepared for it.

In the realm of Hindu temple art, there is hardly room for images of man. The temple figures the transcendental. In earlier Buddhist art, despite the innate idealising tendancy of Indian artists, the subject matter lies in the human, or at least, the creaturely sphere. Not so with Hindu art. Its sole concern is with the superhuman and transcendant, that realm of being against which the human incident is insignificant and meaningless. And this of course is the realm where the idealism, the generalising method of Indian art, is at home. The large broad forms with little development of detail; the cult of stylised beauty; the masses of ornament—gold and jewelled collars, necklaces, anklets, armlets, girdles, tiaras, chignons piled up with pearls—all are appropriate emblems of superhuman, even of super-royal status.

It is practically certain that the sculpture which survives on the hundreds of great Hindu and Jain temples, was once painted. As I have pointed out above, deep relief painted in vivid colours is the ideal Indian artistic method. Practically nothing of all this colour remains. A few traces, perhaps, in the depths of hollows or channels. The sculptures themselves, with their enormous plastic force, often bear witness, by their omission of necessary details like the pupils, lashes and lids of the eyes, that the painter's art once supplemented the art of the sculptor, just as it did in mediaeval Europe. When the painter worked in his own proper mode, on a flat surface, his aim was an effect like that of a painted relief. Unfortunately, only a few fragments of his art are left to us in Hindu temples. They can supply no real history, and can only record isolated scraps of his achievement.

Before we continue to discuss in detail the surviving paintings, something must be said about the Jain faith. For the fragmentary sequence we can compose for the history of mediaeval Indian painting must include a few works in Jain temples. These temples do not differ greatly in general pattern from Hindu temples. The hallows in the main shrine is an image of a Jain"Tirthamkara". But the rest of the fabric, with its tracery of heavenly beings and transcendental symbolism, can easily be mistaken for Hindu. For, like the Buddhists, the Jains shared a common background of Indian religious and daily life with the Hindu masses. Like them, they believe in continuous reincarnation. The basic principle of Jainism is "ahimsa", non-injury. The Jain believes that to the utmost of his power, he must avoid doing an injury to any living being. The ordinary man, without a very profound religious sense, takes little care. He may avoid murdering his fellow men; he may even be a vegetarian. But as he drinks or walks, even as he breathes he commits untold slaughter amongst smaller creatures. The Jain "Tirthamkaras" are the heroes of the faith, canonically seven in number, who set the highest example to the whole Jain community by carrying ahimsa to its logical end, voluntary suicide by desiccation in a state of total immobility. The image of the Jain Tirthamkara is always rigidly frontal, absolutely symmetrical, and naked. Sometimes as a witness to the hero's saintly immobility, creepers have grown up his legs and twined themselves round his arms. Typically of Indian art, the Jain image does not represent the saint as he must have looked, ravaged by his asceticisms, but in his spiritual guise of heroic beauty.

Needless to say, such total sanctity can only be achieved after many,many life-times of steady progress. But throughout history, and still at the present day, Jain saints attain their voluntary suicides. (Incidentally the element of Jainism in Gandhi's political thinking was very important). Pillars, or "towers of fame", were erected to commemorate these events. The saint who achieves this goal is regarded as having gained final release from the endless cycle of birth, suffering and death. Beyond that, Jain doctrine does not go. But it shares with the Samkhya tradition of Brahmanical philosophy the belief that the released spiritual entities remain distinct entities, and are many. It rejects the Vedantic doctrine that released beings are absorbed in the monadic Brahman. In fact, Jain life and Jain thought have accepted much of the same fundamental vision of the cosmic order and mythology as popular Hinduism. Whereas Buddhism derogates belief in the heavens and hells, dismissing them as illusory, Jainism accepts them simply as part of the endless cycle of material existence from which the serious man will disentangle himself as speedily as possible, by absolute ahimsa. Thus imagery of the Hindu cosmic order could find its place in the structure of a Jain temple with scarcely any modification.

CHALUKYA (VIth C.)

In the Deccan about 520 A.D. appeared a powerful dynasty called the Chalukyas. As with other Indian dynasties we know little of their true history, and it is by the work of their artists that we know them best. Early in the sixth century their capital was the humble town of Aihole, where several of the most interesting early Hindu temples stand. About 560 A.D. the Chalukya capital was moved to Badàmi, a town with a strong defensive position. Here were cut some cave temples, and more temples were built. Later, in the seventh century, Pattadakal became the capital, and there yet more temples were constructed. During this last period in connection with their invasion of the Pallava kingdom in the North of the Tamil plains, and the capture of its great city Kanchi, temples in the Pallava style were built at Pattadakal. These have typical relatively plain walls punctuated with pilasters, heavy curved drip-mouldings, moulded eaves and plinth, and a pyramidal spire above the cell, faced with tiers of small pavilions. It is quite probable that artists from the coast were taken back to work at Pattadakal. This, as we shall see later, was of historical importance for the evolution of Deccan painting styles. The Chalukyas were finally eclipsed as an imperial power in 760 A. D.

In all these temples, the work of more than two centuries, virtually nothing of the painting survives. The only pitiful relic is a patch of painted plaster, about two square yards in extent, on one of the cave temples of Badami. It dates to about 578 A. D. Under a layer of smoke-blackening and bat-dung can be made out part of a painting of the betrothal of Shiva and Parvati. Scarcely a trace of colour survives and all that can be discerned is the line drawing of the busts of a few figures. These have a rounded continuity, a softness of inflection, with gently tilted heads and elegant hands that are not far from the early sixth century style of Ajanta. The head of Parvati herself conveys a studied and delicate feminity even through the ruined texture of the surface. The figure of a female dancer, visible only a few years ago, is now lost.

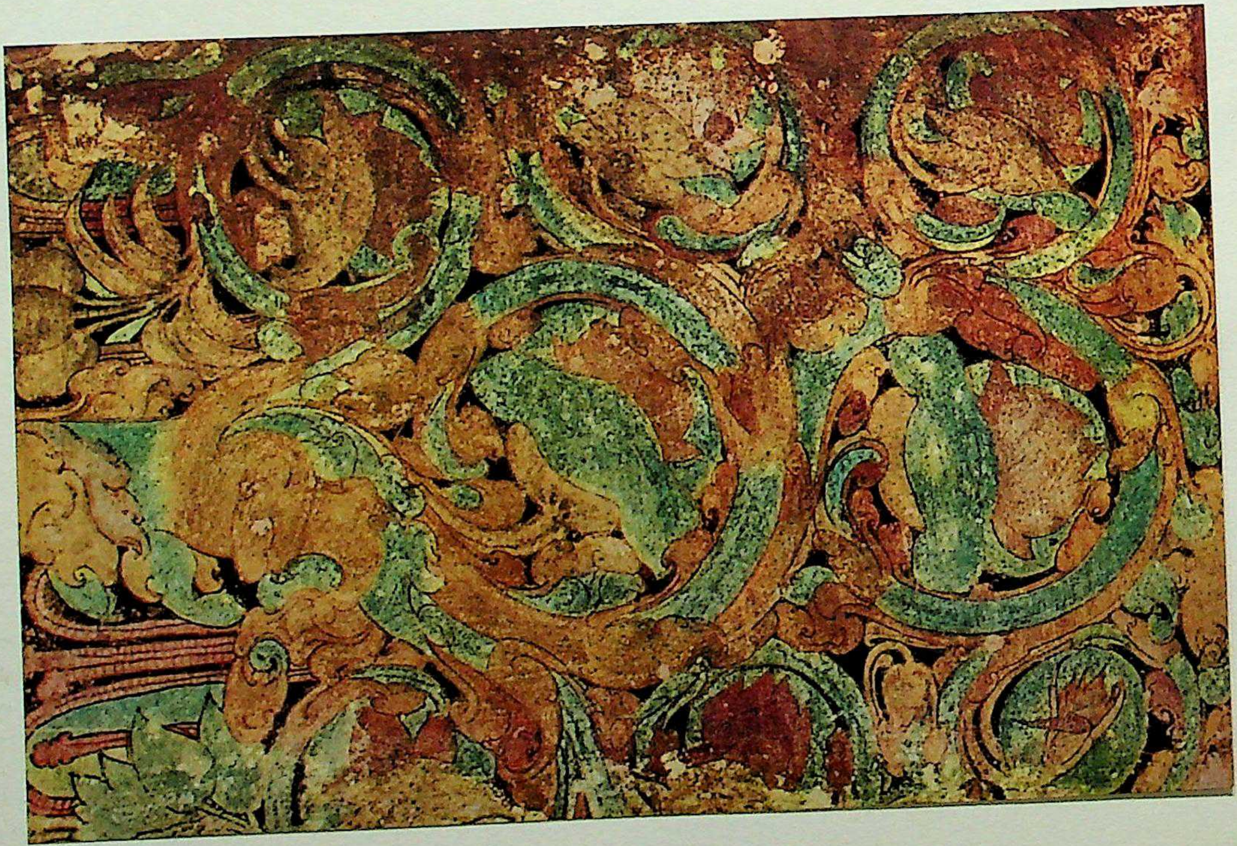
This, unfortunately is all that can be said. If the paintings in these temples, at all the three Chalukya capital cities of the Deccan, once rivalled the sculpture, they must have been magnificent indeed. For it was with the Chalukyas that Hindu art first found itself, and began to unfold its possibilities. Pillars, brackets and panels in the caves and on the structural temples began to blossom with celestial figures. Rough they may be, sometimes a little crude and hasty; but amongst them are sublime works af art.

PALLAVA (VIIIth C.)

An important link in the sequence of mediaeval painting in the south is provided by the art of the eastern coast of about 700 A. D. For it is reasonable to assume that after the capture by the Chalukyas of Kanchi, painters, as well as architects and sculptors from the captured Pallava territories, went to work at Pattadakal. The chief fragments of Pallava painting that survive in the South are at Sittanavasal, Tirumalaipuram and Kanchipuram. One must relate these scraps of painting in one's mind to the sculpture that matches them if one is to have any idea of the real achevement of the artists. The great sea-cliff carving at Mamallapuram, the Pallava capital, with its associated monolithic temples (the rathas) above it, is the best known and most commonly illustrated of these. Its figures compose a continuous, uncompartmented sequence, and the pictorial space is undefined, negative. Space exists only where the figures are, and they are related directly to each other across the visual field by the curves of their contours. The forward arch of the chest of the flying celestials of Mamallapuram, and the proud curves of their long noses reappear in painted fragments elsewhere which are too small to convey much sense of total structure. Precisely where both the sculptural and pictorial styles originated is not certainly known, but is hardly mysterious. They must both have developed out of the art of Andhradesa, Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Kanheri, and the unknown painting styles that went with the sculptures we know from these places.

In the Jain cave at Sittanavasal the Pallava painting that survives illustrates fields of lotus flowers, heavenly resting-places provided by the gods for ascetic saints on their lifelong pilgrimage. The figures are in much faded earth-colours, greens

LOTUSES — JAIN CAVE — SITTANAVASAL — EARLY VIIIth CENT.



and browns, with little modelling. The fields have no geography, no real up nor down. The space, like that of the Mamallapuram cliff carving, is undefined and limitless. Among the decorative motives is the sinuous lotus stem which symbolises the creative sap of life (plate p. 66). At other sites a few fragmentary figures remain, drawn purely in black line, with no modelling at all. Their heads are occasionally over-large, and give them a doll-like air. The most striking characteristics of this style, which reappear in later painting partly derived from the Pallava style, are the sharply angular drawing of the joints of the body—the hanché hips, the elbows, wrists and knees—where no attempt is made to render volumes at all, and the naked angle is left to speak for itself.

ELLORA (VIIIth-IXth C.)

The next Hindu paintings to survive are at Ellora, a site of great importance and sanctity. For there out of the hillsides were excavated many Hindu, Jain and Buddhist caves. Far the most impressive of these is the great Kailasanatha temple. This is a freestanding structure which is in fact a monolith. It was carved, like a colossal sculpture of a building, from an entire hillside, and into walls of the quarry in which it stands are cut other caves. The main temple was not cut as a single, co-ordinated enterprise; it grew by stages under the patronage of different kings. For its heart is one of those sacred natural objects, a natural "lingam" in a cleft of the rock, which had probably been worshipped for centuries by the local people before the first temple proper was cut around it. What is called the Kailasanatha today is both the culmination of the whole cave-temple movement and a transition at the same time. On the one hand, the group of excavations of which is composed is artistically speaking the logical conclusion of the evolving series of caves in the Western Deccan cut during the preceding eight or nine centuries. The superb decorative pillars with their ornamental brackets, and the massively conceived relief sculptures with their sense of urgent movement can only be explained in tetms of their predecessors at Elephanta, Badami, Ajanta, Kanheri, Karle and Bhaja. On the other hand, the form of the top storey, the main shrine, is itself a monolithic copy of structural stone Hindu temples at Pattadakal and through them of the Pallavan temples of the Tamil coast by Kanchi.

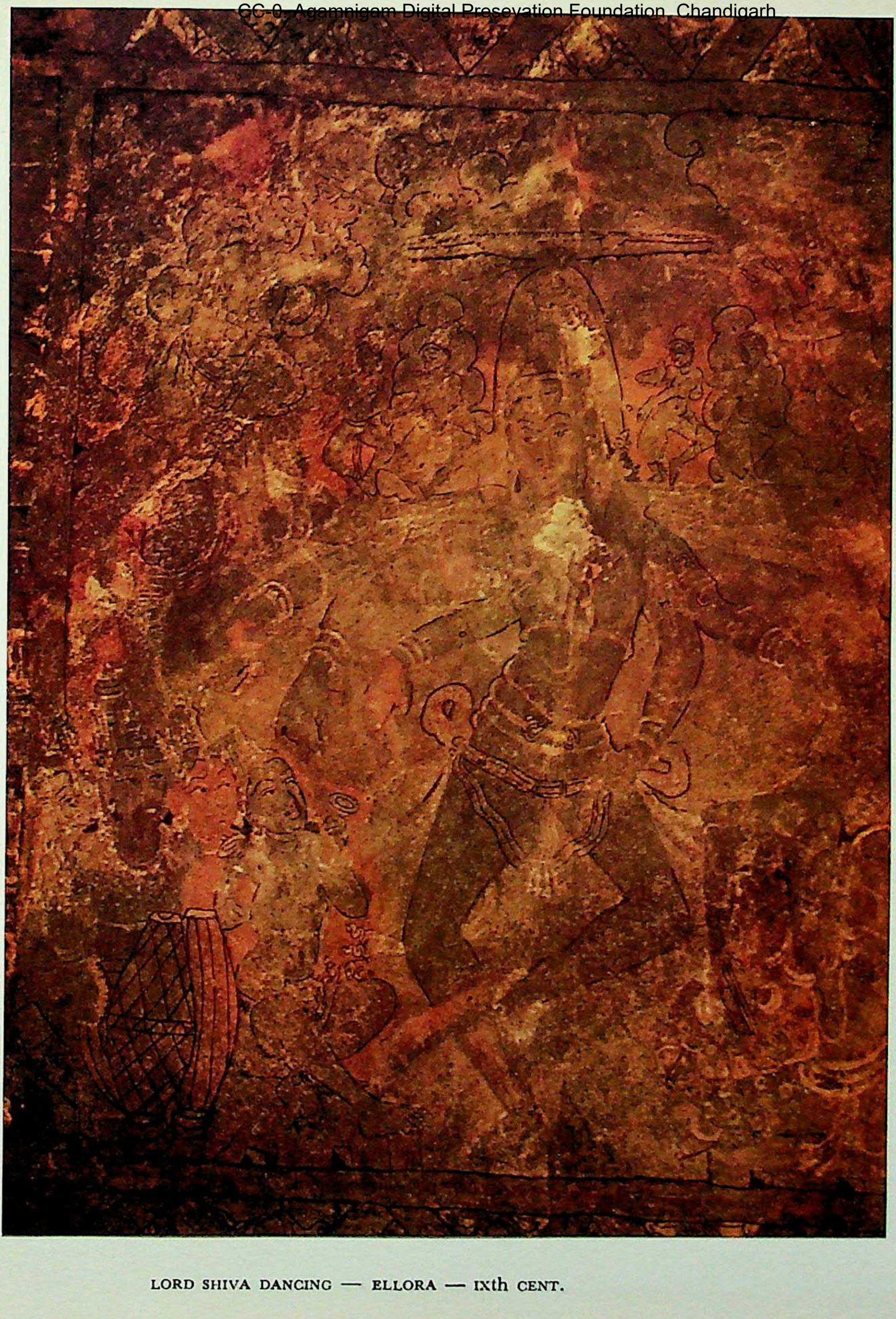
In about 760 the Chalukyas of Pattadakal were defeated by a rival dynasty the Rashtrakutas of the North-Western Deccan, and at least some of their artists were employed by the conquerors to work on the Kailasanatha at Ellora. The first and shallowest stage of the excavation was cut around the natural "lingam" in its cleft. Successive phases of the work deepened the excavation and so raised the main shrine high above the floor of the great quarry. Until about the middle of the tenth century the work went on, and probably ceased with the final defeat of the Rashtrakuta dynasty in 978.

There are several surviving fragments of painting on plaster, on the ceilings of various parts of the Kailasanatha, and a number on walls in the associated caves, especially the Jain caves. But in view of the magnificent development of relief sculpture in hundreds of panels at Ellora one can only bitterly regret that so little painting remains. For the sculptures in their surface-design reveal the development of a new and original conception of pictorial space. No longer does an even, over-all distribution of groups and incidents govern the layout. Now each space is dominated by one or two huge, divine figures, presences who stride or leap with deeply twsted bodies from border to border; or whose majesty, if they are in repose, is spread on leading lines beyond the limits of the frame. We can, unfortunately, only guess at what painters, sharing in the great artistic movement this sculpture betokens, would have been able to do on a broad scale. The little we know does however, give us a glimpse of the possibilities.

The most important fragment on the Kailasa is on the ceiling of the western porch. What remains is in two layers, executed perhaps eighty years apart, in the periphery of a carved lotus at the centure of the stone ceiling panel. The lower earlier layer is visible in a few places where the upper layer has flaked off. The most interesting group of figures that can be seen represents the god Visnu, riding on his mount Garuda, part man, part bird, with his wife Laksmi, her hands joined in reverence to her lord, riding beside him on a feminine Garuda. Around the couples, among stylised clumps of cloud, attendant celestials gesticulate.

The colours are few; earth-reds, yellow, black and white; and the drawing is entirely dominated by tranquil lines, with shallow curves, no modelling and little plastic force. The effect is decorative, lively and pleasant, and even the sharp angular inflections of hips and hands do not disturb the air of contented chic. The second, upper layer of these paintings employs the same limited colour scale; but its tenor and effect are strikingly different. Where the earlier figures are simple and self-contained, and wear hardly any jewellery—goddess Lakshmi herself wears only a single necklace—the later figures display elaborate jewelled collars, corded necklaces, girdles, stomachers, tiaras, coronets, armlets, shoulder-loops of pearls. The deities present themselves proudly to the beholder like the dancing Shiva (in plate p. 69). The animals and birds which fill parts of the composition are vigorous if a little schematic; an elephant boldly eyes the spectator from the midst of a lotus pond.

The contrast between these two imposed styles has an important significance. The earlier style, with its decorative plainness, its brisk gestures, its disregard of volumes at the angular joints, is close to the art of the Pallava East coast. Its angularities and lack of modelling do not recall the sophisticated schematism of the late Ajanta style, as we might expect, nor yet the rounded tenderness of the Badami figures. The clinching factor is the striking similarity of the "lion" on which one of the heavenly beings is riding with the type of lion familiar as a caryatid in the buildings of the Pallavas at Kanchi and elsewhere. Just as the Kailasa itself follows the patterns of Pallava architecture, brought by conquest from Chalukya Pattakakal, so the earliest phase of painting at Ellora also echoes Pallava work. During the interval that separated the execution of the second layer in the Kailasa porch from that of the first, the density, weight and ornamental elaboration that typify Rashtrakuta art during the ninth century have permeated the pictorial style.



LORD SHIVA DANCING — ELLORA — IXth CENT.

Between the two, perhaps closer to the earlier than the later, stands the style of the Jain cave 33, the Indrasabha, where the well-known processional frieze above a series of panels represents a ferocious deity riding a buffalo with attendants. There are very few and simple ornaments here; again the joints of the body are flat angles; and the hair of the attendants is still simply dressed. The panels, all fairly small, contain simple groups or pairs of standing figures, with little attempt at the rendering of visual depth beyond the overlapping of figures. All the personages stand on the base-line of the picture, and the grounds are filled with cloud patterns. Bands of foliate meander, which contain medaillions with bird and flower motifs, separate the panels.

TRAVANCORE (VIIIth C.)

The only other paintings of this epoch to survive are in a rock-cut cave-temple at Tirunanikkara in Travancore in the far south of India. There are a few ruined fragments of figure painting that belong to the eight or ninth century A.D. They display an extreme elegance and suavity of line, without modelling; and the movement of the brush, though disciplined to the canonical inflections, is very much alive, reminiscent in an astonishing fashion of early Chinese Buddhist drawing. The figures appear to have been icons of deities adorned with jewelled chignons and necklaces, and the art-style they represent must have been of the greatest beauty. Its artistic affinities are, perhaps, closest to the remains at Badami.

TANJORE (XIth-XIIth C.)

In the region of the Tamil plains in the far South the heirs to the Pallava empire in its eclipse were the Chola dynasty. The series of powerful Chola Kings, from the accession of Rajaraja I (985-1016) till the end 13 th century, administered one of the most powerful states in India, with a maritime trading empire reaching into North Ceylon, Bengal, Burma, Malaya and Sumatra. Under Chola protection religion, art and Tamil Literature flourished. Many temples in the South grew into religious towns with perimeter walls, gates, numerous courts and halls, supported by royal land-grants and the donations of rich merchants. Architecture, often on a colossal scale, but often, as in Pudukottai, in miniature, evolved a relatively simple style of great beauty with plenty of wall space and interesting developments of pilasters and mouldings.

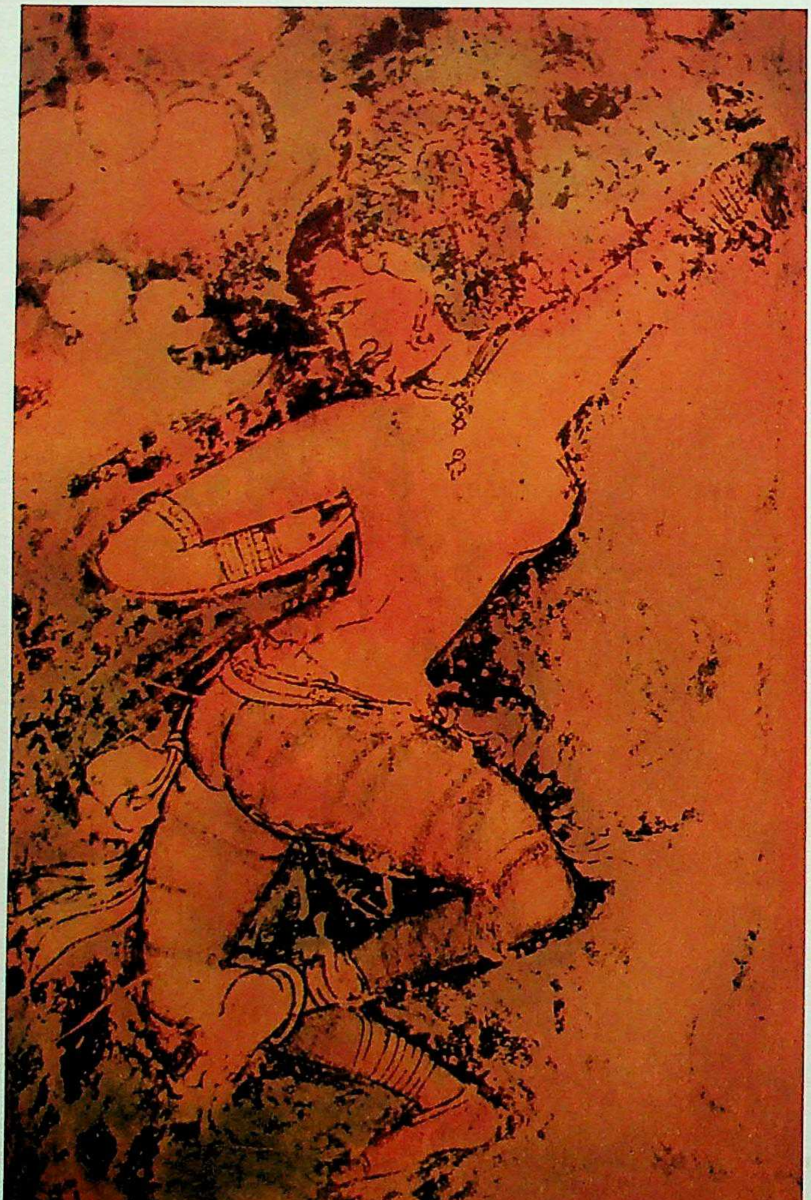
The Cholas were worshippers of Shiva, and the most important remains of Chola painting yet reported are in the great Shiva temple, the Brihadishvarasvamin at Tanjore, the Chola capital, built by the great Rajaraja I by about 1000 A.D. This temple represents the culmination of the first phase of the South Indian architectural style. Its plan consists of a series of pavilions aligned with the main shrine, which faces them from the west, all enclosed by a spacious perimeter wall. The whole temple is dominated by the colossal spire over the main shrine shaped as a four-faced pyramid, 190 feet high. The ground plan of the walled-in space over which this great spire stands is about 90 feet square; in it is the main garbha griha, where the lingam hallows is housed, but which is far from filling the whole space. It is surrounded by a system of passages and shallow radiating cells which occupy the whole additional area. These are in total darkness; no windows penetrate the massive walls, and the effect—no doubt an intentional one—is that of a cavern in the earth. The whole building of the main shrine is holy ground and access is normally only permitted to Brahmins. The surviving wall paintings are in the passages and cells surrounding the garbha griha. There are many of them, dating from at least two major epochs, separated perhaps by a century or more. They represent legends of Shiva; stories from the lives of the Shaiva saints, who enjoyed an enormous prestige in the south for their hymns and poems; and superb figures of attendant women and dancing girls (plate p. 72).

The paintings are all executed on very fine lime plaster, only a few millimetres thick, applied to the stone walls. Their technique is gum tempera and the colours are hot and dense, typically south Indian in taste, with strong reds and yellows, and once again the blue of lapis lazuli.

They are in a most beautiful style. The outlines used are clear and definite, moving in great deeply curving arcs and sweeps, concave as well as convex. But, unlike the drawing of the late Ajanta paintings, these lines do not have any perfunctory quality. Their movement is slow, and they embrace continuous and smoothly fluent forms though they are well aware of the volumes of what they contain. The modelling, which again is taken inwards from the contours to the high points of the masses, is relatively slight, and is no more than an enhancement of the lines. The male figures, gods, sages and kings are very well understood and simplified. The female figures, with their broad faces, their deeply curved hips and thighs and distinct, fruit-like breasts with tiptilted nipples, are most compellingly attractive. Eyes are drawn simply as long, point-ended ellipses without any eyelids defined. Ornaments are relatively modest, as they are on the contemporany Chola sculptures. Pictorial space is spread out into the two dimensions of the frieze where figures move against a background of negative value; but here and there are striking three dimensional devices. There are groups of overlapping figures, and at one place a most surprising row of seated figures that progressively diminish in size, as if into distance. The intention of the latter device may not be purely spatial; gradation of size here may reflect, in the normal manner of Indian art, gradation in the relative importance of the people concerned. But the effect is striking. There can be no mistaking the likeness of the figures in these paintings to some of the superbly sensuous early Chola bronze sculptures, though Chola sculpture as a whole tended to favour the individual figure rather than the dramatic group, and its style is by Indian standards cool and restrained. The fragments in a later style, which are dovetailed into the design of the older painting differ, only by their slight rigidity, and that growing fondness for rich ornament which between 1200 and 1500 turned the art of South India into a jewelled and, one must confess, an often suffocating paradise.

Early Chola painting is capable of rendering movement most vigorously. The bodies of the celestial musicians and dancers appear with outflung arms and leaping legs. The twisted torsos of some of them, the upper part shown full-front, and

DANCING GIRL — BRIHADISHVARASVAMIN, TANJORE — CA. 1000 A.D.



the lower part three-quarters from behind, could only have been conceived by artists who shared in the traditions of Rashtrakuta art, where these radical dislocations expressive of strenuous motion originated, as we know from the sculptures at Ellora. This is to be expected. But now the element of extreme angularity in the movements of the figures, inherited from Pallava tradition, extends beyond the mere sharpness of elbows, or the breaking-back of hands. The negative space, especially under the arms, or against the turn of a waist, asserts sharp angles or steeply concave curves. The armpits, for example, even of seated figures are cut as acute angles. It is in movement, however, that this sharp inward-cutting of the lines is most effective, especially in the many superb figures of dancing girls among the clouds of heaven.

The dancing women and feminine musicians who, in both sculpture and painting, adorn in their thousands the fabric of mediaeval temples are intended to represent the celestial counterparts of the "dancing girls"—the Bayadères—who formed an important part of the establishment of flourishing mediaeval temples. They demonstrate in unique fashion the particularly Indian conception of royalty and the divine. For royalty, and the celestial prototype of royalty with which the gods are invested, consists in the manifestation of power "simultaneously and in all directions". It was accepted in India as axiomatic that the embodiment of power would use it to gratify all of his desires. In fact his power was only made manifest by such ostentations gratification. Thus, heaven, where the courts of the gods are situated, is imagined as containing the "summum bonum" of material luxury as this is conceived in the orthodox Indian mind—a lavish display of gold and jewels, and the constant indulgence in the pleasures of music, dancing and sexuality. For Brahmin morality has always recognised the pursuit of wealth and the gratification of desires as legitimate human ends during the greater part of a man's life. No moral opprobrium is attached to such pursuit as it is in the West.

The dancing girls who were attached to the great temples of India performed the functions of court harem and court entertainers vis-à-vis the temple hallows, where the God dwelt. One of the most important of the pavilions in the layout of the temple was the "natya mandapam" the dance pavilion, where at certain times of day the dancers, accompanied by music and singing, performed for the entertainment of the God, and perhaps also for his magical stimulation. These performances were highly licentious, as were the performances of the non-sacred dancing girls who used to grace—and still do—masculine parties in India. There has been a long, traditional association of music with sexuality rather resembling that between licentiousness and the stage in the west. Only very recently has it become acceptable in India for girls of good family to study music.

The temple dancing girls also served as religious prostitutes, again, as their celestial counterparts, the Apsarases did in heaven. They used to begin their lives with a ritual symbolic of marriage to the deity; and thereafter they were trained not only to perform the ceremonial music and dancing, but also to consort with any man who might pay some tribute to the temple funds. This custom once prevailed in many parts of the world, and in India it seems to have survived longest. Its significance can be explained if one recognises two of the fundamental conceptions of Hindu religious psychology. The first is that the temple is in a sense a reservoir of divine power, a kind of generating station in the countryside, from which that power is spread abroad for the good of the whole land; and the second is the deep-rooted notion that the afflatus of sexual energy is one of the chief manifestations of divine power. The repressions of asceticism, for example, are specifically concerned with its containment and increase. Thus sexual activity within the aura of the deity, where on earth strangers couple with the brides of the god, in heaven the spirits of the pious with the Apsarases, effects both a magical distribution of potency abroad, and a bond of unity between deity and participants.

CEYLON (VIIIth-XIIIth C.)

There are a number of remains of mediaeval Buddhist painting from various buildings in Ceylon. Most of them are related to contemporary styles in the south of India, and can perhaps best be regarded as local variants of these continental styles. The present state of preservation of these works, and their extremely fragmentary condition, unfortunately hides their full achievement purely as works of art. But they do help to fill in our historical picture of the evolution of southern painting during the centuries between Sittanavasal and the later art of the Hindu Cholas.

There is one most interesting Ceylonese parallel with 8th century painting in India, in a group of wall paintings that have been found in a relic chamber at Mihintale. These works show no relationship with the Sihagiri work, but a close affinity with the remains of Pallava art. The stupa to which the chamber belonged had long fallen to ruin, and the chamber had been opened at some time in the past by looters so that water had entered and lain stagmant inside. Two panels of painting on plaster, fairly high up the walls, have been preserved. They are bare outline drawings in red and black of celestial beings who, like the divine girls of Sihagiri and the deities of Ellora, float on airy cushions of cloud. One panel represents an important deity seated within a circular halo between two attendants; another, a group of figures of musicians and dancers flying with the same brisk and angular gestures as one finds in South Indian parallels. The figures are all somewhat childish in proportions, with over-large heads burdened with the massive crowns and chignons proper to the inhabitants of heaven. The faces are oval, the features scantily and crudely indicated. But there is one interesting feature of these paintings. Dividing each panel in two runs a straight vertical line, clearly a guide-mark for the artist in estimating the balance of his picture. In the panel with the seated deity this line runs down the centre of his body and his attendants balance each other symmetrically. But in the other panel, the composition of which is far from symmetrical, with a very strongly marked movement to the right, the dividing line has been used to achieve a positive balance nevertheless. It is clear that here we have a chance record of one of the technical devices used by mural painters of the Indian tradition to help them with their boldly brushed-in, immediate compositions.

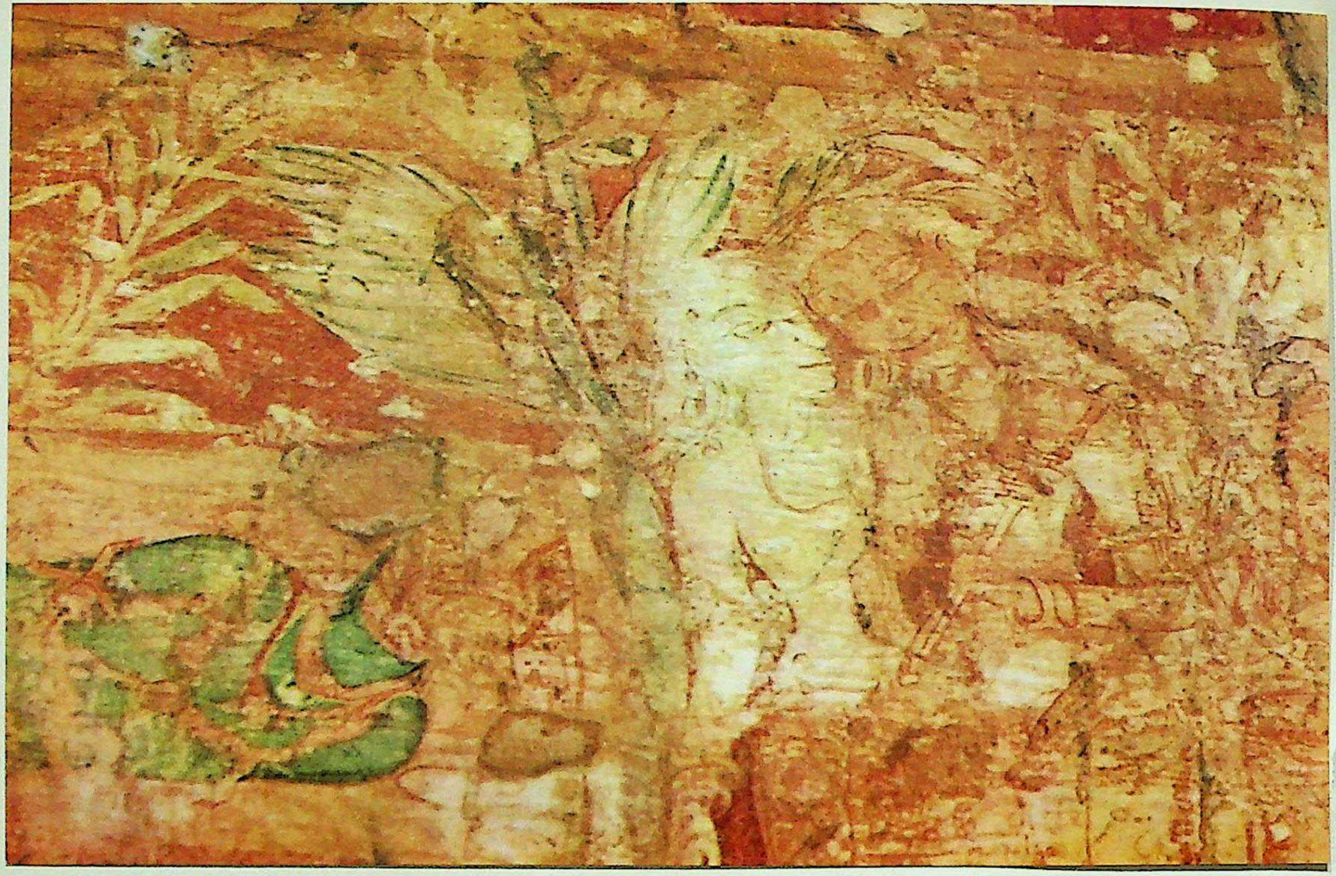
These figures were intended as attendants on the sacred relics enclosed in the chamber. Their painted presence is a mark of proper respect. But why they were left untinted, and merely sketched on the wall we cannot know. Perhaps a spiritual parsimony, a rather perfunctory devotion decreed their merely nominal presence, as a necessary formality. Perhaps it was genuine poverty.

In 1950 a relic chamber at the stupa-site of Mahiyangana was ceremoniously opened, and a number of fragments of wall painting on plaster were discovered. These probably belong to the ninth or tenth century A.D., though the relic chamber itself seems, on the evidence of the objects found within it, to have been sealed finally only in the twelfth. The paintings again are little more than outline drawings in two tones of ochre of parts of single figures, mainly jewelled deities and monks. Their relationship with the rather restrained sculptures of the late Pallava style helps to date them earlier than the Chola epoch. They are elegant stereotypes with narrow hips, neat garments and cool gestures, devoid of any profound expression.

Painting of the 12th century is represented in several places. In a rock shelter near Dimbulagala are a few figures, the remains of a large composition of gods adoring the Buddha. Far the most important collection of 12th century work, however, is preserved on shrines at Polonnaruwa, the second capital of Ceylon. It became the capital after the capture and destruction of Anuradhapura by Tamil invaders from the mainland. The style of the work, though it bears a relationship (of descent) to that of Tanjore, is unmistakably Ceylonese. The jewelled deities and princes adorning the Tivamka shrine with their presence are most skilfully and fluently drawn with precise and sinuous contours, altogether lacking the vigour and voluptuous fire of the Tanjore paintings. There is scarcely any modelling; but a thoroughgoing and inventive decorative line carries out the intricacies of the lavish ornament. The colours are the same as those of Sihagiri. There are some most interesting panels of narrative representing Jataka stories. In them the artists have not been confined to carrying though established iconic prescriptions, but have been obliged to rely on their own native invention for the greater part of the work. The plate (p. 76) reproduces a detail from one of these panels. The figures all stand on the base-line. The trees, however, are more than mere stage-properties and have a majestic scale of their own. The relationship between the figures in conversation is very well conveyed, and the whole scene is drawn with an unsophisticated directness that foreshadows later Ceylonese work.

Elsewhere at Polonnaruwa there are occasional brilliant remains, like the superb head of an old man painted on a strip of plaster in the Galvihara. He was probably one of the "Brahmans and deities" worshipping the large relief figure of Buddha carved at the back of the shrine, and once painted. We can still see here a humane and sensuous delicacy that seems temporarily to vanish in India proper after about 1100.

These are the scattered relics of the art of wall-painting in ancient Ceylon. And they are all religious. We are told by the chronicles, however, that at the founding of the city of Yapahura (1225) by Parakrama Bahu II the king employed 3000 painters in decorating four palaces and 500 houses. We are also told that the theatre in the palace of his predecessor, Parakrama Bahu I, was illustrated with paintings of incidents in the king's career. A bath and a four-storied "Pavilion of love" were also decorated with appropriate pictures.



THE GREEN PRINCE — POLONNARUWA, CEYLON — XIIth CENT.

VIJAYNAGAR (XIIIth-XVth C.)

The period of Moslem invasions in India began in earnest during the 10th century, gathered force, and by the 14th century there were a large number of Moslem Kingdoms—sultanates—all over India. In the Deccan Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda were ruled by dynasties following an Islamic code of life, drawing the main part of their cultural inspiration from Persia. Against these warlike and powerful neighbours the Hindu state of Vijayanagar stood out until 1565, when they succeeded finally in combining to crush her. The victors kept an army of men engaged for a full year in the work of destroying utterly the great capital city and its temples. Today only a few, relatively insignificant remains mark the spot where one of the greatest Hindu dynasties flourished for centuries. However, at two smallish Vijaynagar temples away from the capital, Anegundi and Lepakshi, remains of paintings are preserved.

The Vijaynagar style makes its first appearance in the wall and ceiling painting of Uchayappa Matha at Anegundi. The figures in these pictures, as in earlier Indian

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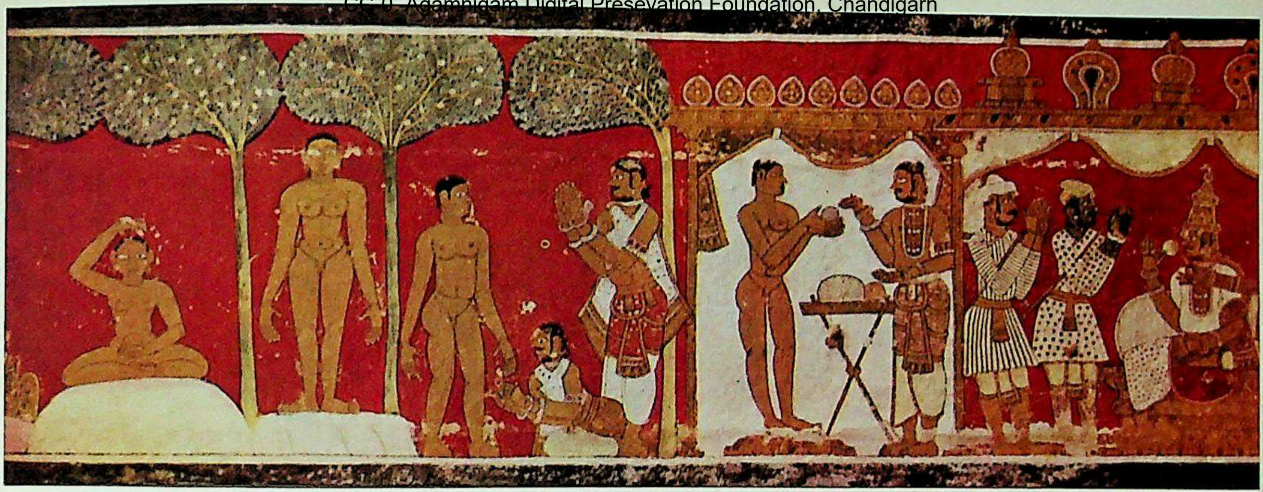
murals, were first outlined in red on the plaster ground, then coloured with a blazing red, yellow and blue, and finally fixed with strong black outlines. Now most of the colour has vanished, and what remains amounts to little more than outline drawing. The backgrounds are adorned with clearly and simply drawn flowers and trees, with panels of elephants among lotuses, and with hanging garlands. The rococo, ornamental exaggerations of the flowers and clouds of later Vijaynagar art have not yet appeared. But the figures walk firmly along the base-line of their frame, with their feet both directed to one side. The volumes, however, are seen simply and clearly, the drawing is fluent, and through its energetic twists the continuous volume of the body is clearly conceived, echoing at three centuries distance the skill of the Cola painters. The axis through the pelvis, which is nearly always shown in profile, creates the necessary sense of three dimensional relief, even though the space of the setting remains undeveloped. In one panel a charming and extraordinarily realistic squirrel bounds across a hillock.

Lepakshi is now a small village dominated by the magnificent temple of Virabhadra, one of the many aspects of the great god Shiva. The surviving ceiling paintings, probably of the late fifteenth century, are all devoted to various icons of Shiva, represented in continuous frieze-like bands framed by bands of ornament. The figures stand on the base-line, and are almost in pure profile, save for the upper part of the torso, which is seen frontally with both shoulders presented, as in Egyptian art. Though there are generally three or four attendant figures standing on each side of the icons, there is no question of the banded space developing into a narrative continuity in time, as it does at Tiruparutikundram. The Hindu icons we have here are themselves telescoped representations of familiar stories which need not be rehearsed *in extenso*. And though the attendant figures may overlap each other occasionally, they do not convey any sense of composition in depth. These characteristics are quite consistent with what remains of Vijayanagar relief-carving.

Even so there are many things about these pictures which suggest that they have inherited the tradition of older Chola art. The semi-nude iconic figures especially show a sensuous appreciation of volume in their rounded contours. This may be the result of a conscious archaising tendancy among the Vijaynagar artists, who may well have been conscious of their semi-political role as supporters of Hindu culture against the incursions of Islam. However the same method of rendering trees is used as at Tiruparutikundram discussed below. The late, specifically South Indian characteristics of these pictures are revealed especially in the attendant figures. They are : a fondness for towering jewelled crowns, and for elaborately folded and pleated draperies, with the hard, flat curves of their design and patterns emphasised in solid white paint; the heavy stress laid on the many echoing curves of the flesh-folds of the neck, of necklaces, armlets, anklets and "epaulettes"; and the lavish display of the jewellery of the heavenly beings. The whole of the background to the celestial scenes is strewn appropriately with flower-like stars. From the upper edges of the space-band deep curved swags and fans, probably the "heavens' embroidered cloths". The wriggling contours of boat-like clouds are strewn here and there as well as several unattached curves and enigmatic curved shapes. In one of the longer compositions many standing gods, a bull and cow, and a female deity in a chariot, encounter Shiva and Parvati enthroned on their splendid bull Nandi under a cluster of fringed umbrellas. Here the denseness of ornament on the figures and filling the space around produces a studied effect of enormous richness. In strong contrast with this display of heavenly opulence are the figures of the donor brothers at one side, who paid for the painting on the walls. Simple and modest, wearing plain white cotton garments, they join their hands in *namaskara*.

At Tiruparutikundram, in a 14th century Jain temple, survives a portion of an extensive décorative scheme, painted on walls, pillars, brackets and especially the ceiling. Tiruparutikundram is far to the south of the other main sites of Vijaynagar painting. It is held by some writers that all the surviving pictures belong to the late 14th century; but this is impossible. Layering is visible in the paint, and it is clear that much has been repainted in the later Vijaynagar epoch. The older sections contain figures drawn with the relative fluency of Anegundi. The later figures are strongly tinged with the schematicism of Lepakshi and wear similar towering crowns. In the later sections too are figures in cut and stitched garments influenced from Islam. In fact these paintings are perhaps the most important documents we possess bearing on the growth of mediaeval painting in India.

Although the temple was a Jain establishment not all the paintings are of Jain subjects. There is a splendid series devoted to the life of Krishna, and many others represent gods familiar in Hinduism. The medium once again is gum tempera on plaster. The colours are strong and clear - white, red, yellow and blue. The black outlines are firm, and only in the older figures is there any attempt at modelling. With the exception of frontal icons of the Jain Tirthamkaras, the heads of the figures are all shown in profile, with, spanning the cheek, a long, pointed conceptual eye whose upper eyelid is drawn in. The bodies of the figures are shown in three-quarter view, the feet in profile indicate direction of movement. But from the artistic point of view the importance of these works lies chiefly in their conception of pictorial space. At first sight the treatment is similar to that in Chola art; the figures, most of which stand on the base-line of the picture, form a kind of frieze against, the background of unexplained negative area. In fact, however, an exceedingly interesting change has taken place. The paintings (plate p. 79) which are narratives, are contained in long continuous space-bands that represent time; and the only elements to appear in the background are stage properties that participate in the progress of the story. The story is carried forward through a multiplicity of figures. Thus we see used again here the method we encountered before in the paintings of the Shaddanta Jataka, more than thirteen centuries earlier, in cave X at Ajanta. But at Tiruparutikundram there is no trace of appreciation of visual space, or of the sensuous, idealistic humanism displayed by the great Ajanta painter. The mediaeval South Indian artist presents a firm, schematic image of the story in figures, schematic too, that accurately indicate the outward status-characteristics of the participants. There is no attempt to render feelings, none of the elegant dislocations of movement employed in earlier styles, and little interest in the textures of reality. This is an art that simply recites



AN INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF A JAIN SAINT — TIRUPARUTIKUNDRAM — XIVth CENT.

the bald circumstances of a heroic legend which is thoroughly familiar. The sphere of reality in which it moves has none of the attributes of the everyday world. It is not in the heavens; it is not on the earth as ordinary mortals know it. It is a legendary uncharacterised region where the only thing of any consequence is the story.

There are two details of the technical method of this painting which will play a part of crucial importance in later discussions. The first is the method of rendering trees. The whole area occupied by the mass of foliage is laid in with a single, dark greenish-brown tone, and onto this are drawn, in body colours filled with white, the patterns of twigs and leaves. The second is the use of rows of solid raised dots of white paint to render the strings of jewellery which adorn the figures of high social standing.

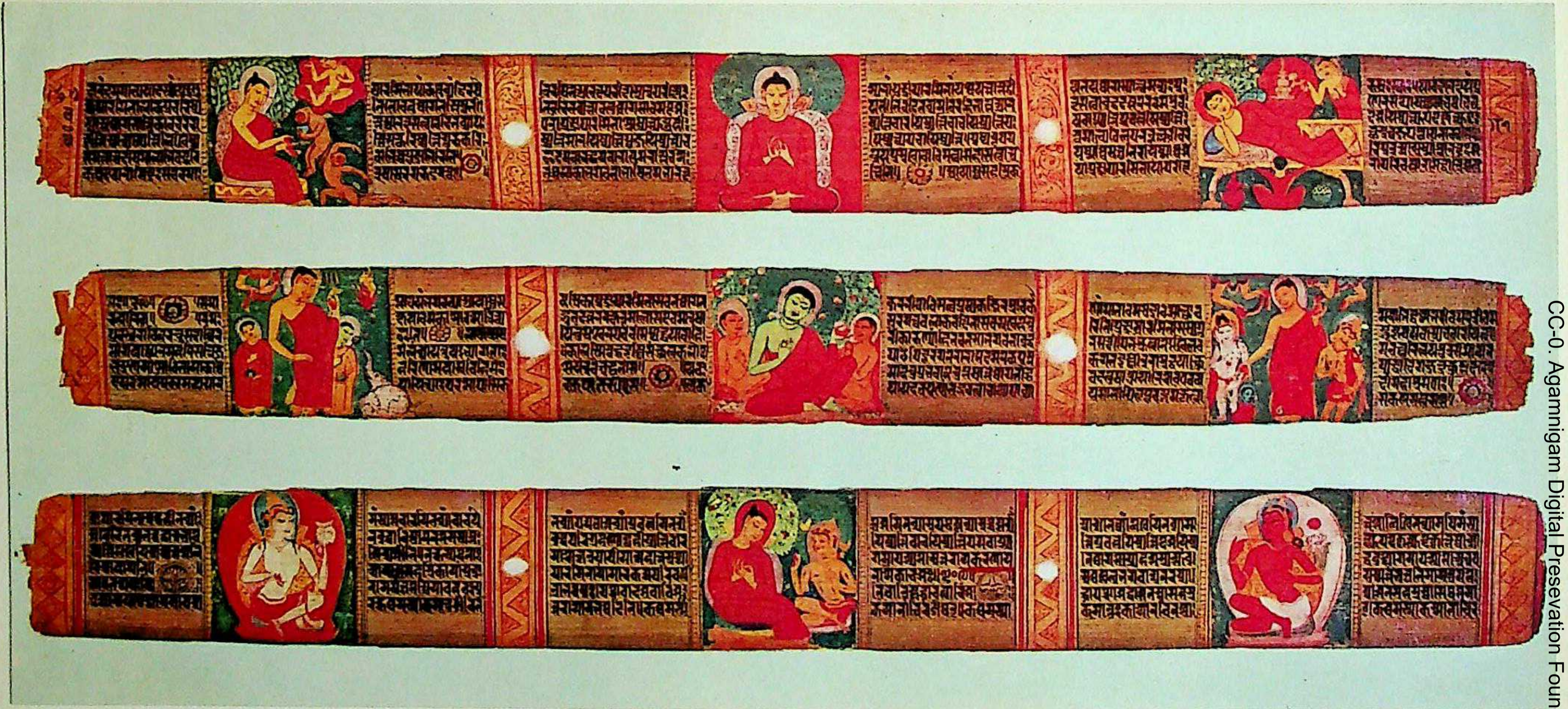
MADANPUR (XVth C.)

The last of the mediaeval monumental paintings we must discuss are about contemporary with those at Anegundi, but belong to a totally different tradition. They are on the ceilings of hall belonging to a ruined temple dedicated to Vishnu at Madanpur in Central India. This temple was built in the reign of King Madana Varma, 1130-1165 A.D., but the paintings are obviously much later work. Some scholars have believed them to be 12th c. in date, but their style shows that they must have been painted about 1400 A.D. For they can be placed in the middle of the evolution of the Western Indian manuscript style which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Part of the painting on a large rectangular ceiling panel remains. It represents a motive that is very common in carved decoration, a great opening lotus flower, flanked by a pair of flying celestial figures, who carry garlands. This lotus, unfolding above the visitor's head, is an emblem of the opening heavens, of the emerging universe. It is one of the commonest of all motives in Indian art, from the earliest times. The real lotus flower that beautifies so many of India's tanks and ponds, rises from the muddy bottom and is carried on its bare stem above the surface of the water. There it opens. As an image for the crossing of the states of existence, from the undifferentiated absolute of "the waters" into the contingent world of things, the lotus has haunted the Indian imagination. Even when it is used as a standard epithet for feminine beauty, "the lotus-eyed", "she of the lotus feet", it carries with it the cosmic overtones that lend to so many of the figures of Indian speech their profound resonance in the mind.

The celestials who fly in the corners of this lotus panel are often described as Vidyadharas, the "bearers of knowledge". But they are essentially two common members of their kind who leap and twist in every Indian temple. Drawn facing each other with a precise but calligraphic touch, with pointed noses, bearded and moustached, three-pointed tiaras on their heads, they kick one foot high up behind in the familiar flying pose. Their tight garments are elaborately patterned, with flying fish-tailed scarves, and they wear many jewels. The essentials of their posture offer a stylised rendering of movement. The shoulders are seen almost frontally and the head in three-quarter profile with the further eye projecting slightly beyond the contour of the cheek. The torso is so sharply twisted as to present the hips and thighs almost from behind, the nearer leg flung forward, the further, back.

The other paintings at Madanpur are bands of small panels containing schematic pictures of animal fables. Moral tales of this kind have been popular in India far longer even than in Europe, and belong to no particular religious background. At Madanpur the stories have been reduced to the barest elements needed to fill the picture. Pictorial space is non-existent. The little figures of stupid asses, cunning jackals, astute birds, vain frogs, and people who suffer the consequences of their follies are no more than mnemonic devices, intended to recall familiar and well-loved stories to the minds of spectators who know them well. There are schematic trees, and the ground, like the ground of the paintings at Lepakshi, is sown with small flowers and star-like devices.



CANONICAL INCIDENTS FROM THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA
BUDDHIST PALM-LEAF MANUSCRIPT — CA 1100 A.D. — BODLEIAN LIBRARY, OXFORD

MEDIAEVAL MANUSCRIPT PAINTING

OUT of the enormous quantity of small-scale and perishable painting that we know to have been done in ancient India all that survives to the present day is in the pages of palm-leaf, birch-bark and paper manuscripts of religious texts. These, because of their special sanctity, were carefully preserved in libraries whilst other types of painting were allowed to suffer the usual fate of fragile objects in India's climate. The illuminated manuscripts fall into three classes. First there are the manuscripts of mediaeval Bengal, Bihar and Nepal, mainly Buddhist but a few Hindu. Second, the Western Indian manuscripts mainly of the Jain faith. And third the manuscripts of a later date but similar types made in Orissa for followers of the Krishna religion. On the whole, the examples on paper appear usually in the later stages of each tradition.

Palm-leaf was far the commonest ancient material for manuscripts. A palm leaf book is made up of strips of dry palm leaf, roughly rectangular, twelve to eighteen inches long and about two inches wide. Each strip has holes bored in it and is threaded onto cords perhaps three feet long, the ends of which are usually fastened by knots outside wooden covers at each end. When the book is stored its leaves are tightly pressed together into a pile at one end of the cords and the long ends of cord are bound round it. When it is in use, the cords are unbound, and the leaves can be lifted from the pile to be read, slipped along the cords into a second pile. The cords thus keep the leaves in their proper order; but as dried palm leaf is rather fragile the cords always do a certain amount of damage to the edges of their holes. The text is written with the length of the leaf held crossways, usually in columns, and panels may be reserved for pictures or bands of ornament. Occasionally a complete leaf will be filled with illustrations and the enclosing boards are generally illuminated both outside and in. The script, which is often very beautiful, was written with a slant-cut bamboo pen (plate p. 85).

The technique of painting used in miniature painting did not, in fact, differ greatly from that used in wall painting. The basis of the whole design was the outline, which was traced on a prepared surface, occasionally it was then covered by a complete layer of white, so that it remained visible only as a faint grey line. The main colour masses were then laid on, those of the background first; and the final definition was given by firm contours of black, or sometimes of strong colour.

BUDDHIST MANUSCRIPT PAINTING (XIth-XVth CC.)

The palm-leaf manuscripts of Eastern India are mainly Buddhist, of the school known as Vajrayana. A few Brahmanical texts in the same style are known, and once there may well have been many in existence, but for lack of institutional care they have perished. Vajrayana Buddhism had grown up mainly to the north and east of India, and had enjoyed the patronage of the great emperor Harsha (606-648 A.D.) and later of the Pala kings of Bihar and Bengal. And although its basis lay in the traditional ascetic mode of monastic life, its monasteries had grown wealthy and the largest of them had developed into university cities, inhabited by thousands of monks, dedicated to the pursuit of various branches of Buddhist learning, such as medicine, logic lan and philosophy. The two most famous of these were Nalanda and Vikramashila. The vast site of Nalanda has recently been excavated. The modern monasteries of Tibet closely followed the pattern of these mediaeval monasteries of India.

Because of their striking appearance, and for the sake of their wealth, these monasteries were natural targets for the agression of the forces of Islam. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Muslims slaughtered their monks and nuns by thousands, and razed their stupas, splendid courtyards and viharas to the ground, burning and pillaging. Little escaped the fury of Islam. Of the wall paintings that certainly contributed to the legendary splendour of these great seats of learning nothing remains. A number of palm-leaf manuscripts, some probably carried away to the monasteries of Nepal before the Muslim invasion, is all that survives.

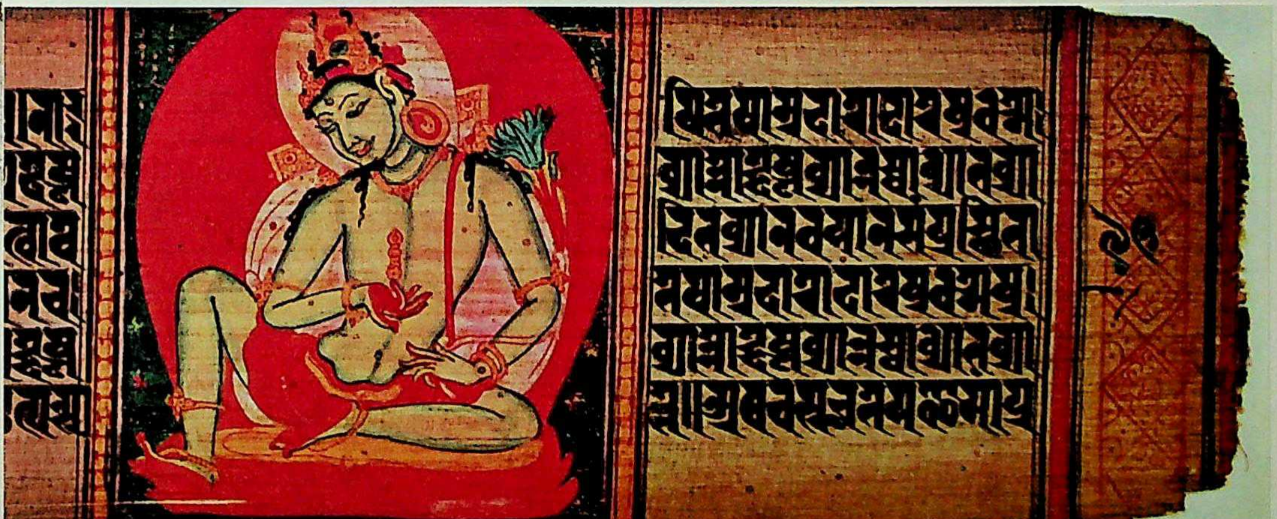
Vajrayana is a form of Buddhism with an elaborate iconography of figures representing transcendental principles. It shares with other schools of Buddhism the same basic set of texts dealing with the life of the Buddha and the Jatakas, but it lays a far greater emphasis on the virtues of meditation as a way to the supreme goal, and much of its literature is concerned with the technical details of meditation method. The oldest distinctly Vajrayana works that we know belong probably to the 7th century A.D. They are the Hevajra and the Guhyasamaja Tantras. (This form of Buddhism is often called "Tantrik".)

The fundamental idea lying behind the multiplicity of figures used in this form of Buddhism is doctrinal. Bodhi, enlightenment, the end of the Buddhist life, is not recognised as a distinct and characteristic condition. It is not stipulated as a positive goal to be actively sought, but appears as natural consequence of the elimination of obscuring delusions, of rooting out obsessive adherence to ideological fictions. The Buddha nature is innate in humanity and the world; we only have to "wash the windows" as it were to see clearly into our own nature and find the Buddha there. This, though easy to talk about, is extremely difficult to do. All kinds of symbolic devices and meditative methods were evolved by the various Buddhist sects to assist the process. The Vajrayana especially laid great stress on the use of visualisation. Anthropomorphic spiritual principles, symbolic of the various fields of human action and experience, were evoked in the mind of the meditating monk, combined into symbolic diagrams, reconciled with his own vital forces, and resolved into each other. These figures were, of course, based upon the traditional images of Indian folklore and literature; many of them are not even Buddhist in origin.

The literature of more orthodox Buddhism, dealing with the "historical" aspects of the lives of the Buddha, was visually conceived in the same artistic mould as the more fanciful material. It is easy to see that this art has none of the realistic prepossessions of Christian art. The birth of the Buddha, his preaching and death take place in the same timeless conceptual space as the mystical concourses of spiritual principles. After all there is for the Buddhist no intrinsically "real" world where they could have taken place; so that "realism" as an artistic aim would be entirely beside the Buddhist point.

The book illustrated here (plates p. 82 and p. 85) is the great Prajnà Paramita sutra, the fundamental text upon which the Buddhist philosophy of "emptiness" is based. This philosophy proclaims irrefutably that no thing, no

FIGURE OF VAJRAGARBHA LOKESVARA — BUDDHIST PALM-LEAF MANUSCRIPT
CA 1100 A.D. — BODLEIAN LIBRARY, OXFORD.



concept, no conceptual structure, no idea of the universe, reality or the real is any more than a fantasy. This viewpoint, experienced in full, not merely "held" as a matter of intellectual conviction, is the cornerstone of mediaeval Buddhism. And by a process that is very familiar in India the Prajna (wisdom) which it enshrines was visualised anthropomorphically as a feminine deity, Prajna-Paramita. Her Persona was transmitted to the later Nepalese and Buddhist images of the feminine Taras. By a yet further extension of thought, also familiar throughout India, the book in which this wisdom was expounded was conceived as cognate with the transcendant body of Prajna herself, and so was worshipped as a sacred object. The artistic adornment of such a sacred body amounts itself to an act of reverence. One version or another of this same idea has provided a motive for the art of the illuminator at many other times and places. Even today, in India, the reverence of the learned man for his texts goes far beyond anything we know in the west. It has its good side, in that it has helped preserve much of ancient tradition. But it has its bad side too, in an ingrained refusal to criticise any utterance that tradition has once hallowed. This has proved a terrible handicap to India's educational progress in the modern world.

The manuscript illustrated is dated by a colophon to the 15th year of Ramapala, ca. 1085-90 A.D. It comes from Bengal or eastern Bihar, and the style of its miniatures is closely related to the sculptural style current in that part of India at that time. More especially it displays types and a linear method strongly reminiscent of the last phase of painting at Ajanta, of ca. 700 (see plates p. 46 and p. 49). This is not altogether surprising. For there are good grounds for assuming a relatively homogeneous style of painting in India during the 7th-8th centuries A.D.

There are in existence a fair number of manuscripts of this kind, ranging in date from the 11th to the 15th centuries. Only the earliest examples, however, can be attributed to an origin in India proper. For with the eclipse of Buddhism and the destruction of the Buddhist monasteries in the early 13th c. by the forces of Islam, this kind of artistic activity came to an abrupt end on Indian soil. The style survived, however, in Nepal, in Tibet, and possibly in some of the Buddhist hill-districts to which it had been transplanted. In Nepal especially it continued to flourish, and the later examples of palm-leaf miniatures of this kind are Nepalese. They can be associated with sculptures that served the same form of religion. The pictorial style that we know from the manuscripts provided the basis for the early 15th c. Napalese hanging pictures on prepared cotton cloth. These, called "Tankas", were also made in Tibet in huge numbers down to the present day. And though the experienced eye can distinguish Nepalese and Tibetan styles, their common origin is obvious.

It was in these northern regions that the mediaeval styles of India were preserved most sympathetically. The visionary tradition of Buddhist meditation maintained the need for thorough "realisation" in visual terms of the spiritual principles of its hierarchy; and these "visual terms" were more or less the same as the old Indian terms which laid special emphasis on the volumes of the forms. Needless to say, the realisation in question here bears no resemblance to the methods of realism.

It must be mentioned that the mediaeval Eastern Indian style of painting, known to us only through these palm-leaf manuscripts, also provided the basis for a school of wall-painting that flourished in the temples of Pagan and Myin Pagan in Burma between the 10th and 14th centuries, Many examples of this art survive. The eclectic religions and political life of Burma at that time, however, produced stylistic developments that cannot be studied here.

WESTERN INDIAN MANUSCRIPT PAINTING (XIth-XVIth C.)

Far the greater part of this kind of painting is devoted to texts of the Jain faith. There are, however, a few late examples known of manuscripts of Hindu literature decorated in the same style. In the West of India Jainism seems always to have flourished especially. Jain temples there are in the Deccan and parts of the South. Even at the present day in Mysore, for example, Jainism is widespread and popular. But from early mediaeval times down to the present day its greatest support has been in the West, especially amongst the class of wealthy merchants whose patronage has played such an important part in preserving Jainism as a living religion.

Many of the great Jain temples of Western India were provided with basement repositaries, where whole libraries of manuscript texts were preserved intact for centuries. Many of these manuscripts were, like the manuscripts of Eastern India, ornamented with miniatures. Relatively, a very large number survive. Others have even been preserved since the 11th century in the houses of Jain families who own them still today. Their very numbers have led some scholars to overstate the influence of the style as a whole, and to try and derive other Indian styles directly from their example. A great deal of money was certainly spent on them, but the Western Jains have always formed a closely knit and traditional community, and their illuminated texts do not seem to have been dispersed into the rest of India.

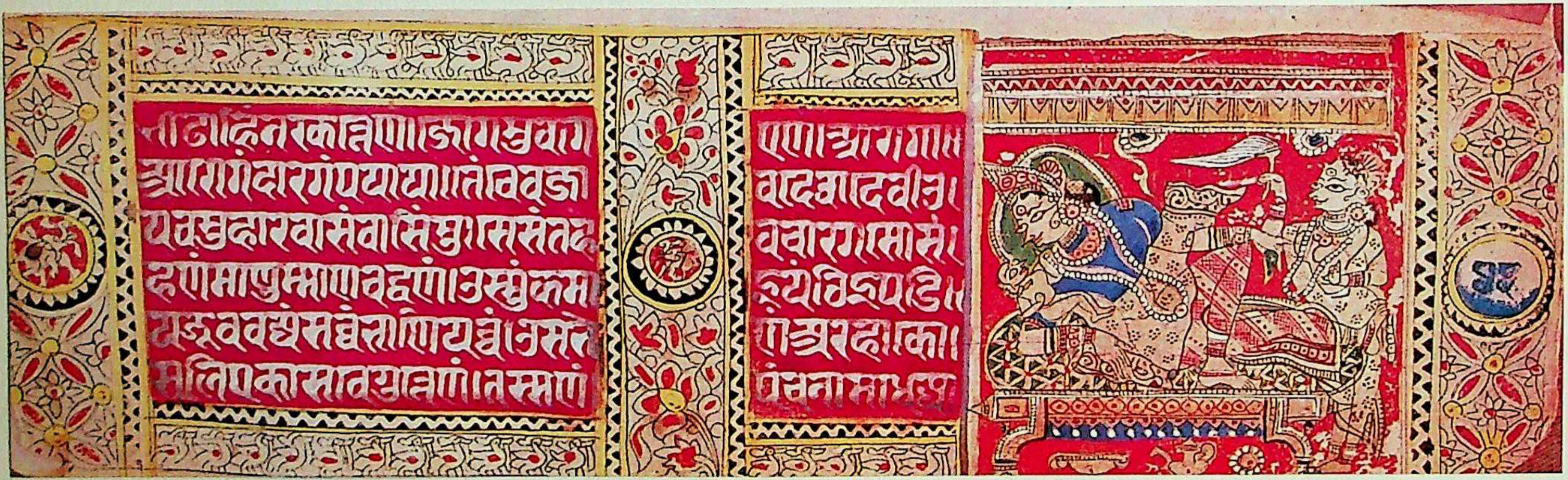
Fundamentally, the same general motive prompted the illumination of these texts as prompted the production of other art in India, the urge to *adorn* something worthy of respect; the adornment itself thus constitutes a mark of reverence. Most of the literature deals with the lives of Jain saints, their tribulations and their ultimate command over the universe and the transcendant realms of heaven and hell. The illuminations are therefore of three chief types : first, narrative ; second, schematic representations of the transcendant regions with their population of deities ; third, pure ornament. But in an important sense the first two types are extensions of the third.

Far too little is yet known in the West about Jain literature as a whole, and it is not all certain when it first came to be committed to writing. But by the eleventh century A.D., when the earliest known miniatures were probably painted, the need to ensure the preservation of the enormous mass of Jain tradition in written form was stongly felt. Until about 1400 the manuscripts were made of palm-leaf, and the text was written here too with a slant-cut bamboo pen. Often, however, only a single cord was used to string the leaves together. The earliest illuminations (in a manuscript dated 1100 A.D.) are decorative panels, but there a few figure drawings of elephant riders, and Apsarases. In later manuscripts the figure drawings representing laymen listening to sermons, goddesses, monks and stories of the lives of saints, increase in numbers and importance.

The drawing of these early manuscripts is executed in black outlines; the colours are strong yellow, crimson, green and black with some blue. Red backgrounds are especially common. The drawing of the figures is very distinctive, with hard outlines that still retain a clear intention to contain the solid forms of bodies. The figure types are closely related to the temple sculptures of the same epoch, and the use of bands of dark tone attached to the contours is intended to suggest the rounded effect of relief sculpture. Architecture, and accessories such as umbrellas are often outlined with bands of dark tone around the outside of their contours which reinforce the effect of relief. Noses are very angular, the eyes have long, pointed corners; and there appears the strange and characteristic Western Indian custom of showing the far eye in a three quarter profile face standing out beyond the contour of the cheek. In many ways the figure drawing of these early miniatures is reminiscent of that in the Jain caves at Ellora.

As time went on the plastic reference of this style gradually vanished, and the lines came to take on a wiry calligraphic quality that has scarcely any three-dimensional significance: all the elements of the design are reduced to looping curves and clear angles, the whole design garnished with occasional curlicues of eyebrow, hair and drapery. The lines are finely drawn and vital, and embrace a seated figure, a horse and rider or an elephant without establishing emphatic enclosures. More pale colours were used, pinks and browns, and a very beautiful pale blue became common. By ca. 1400, when paper was introduced for these manuscripts, the figure types had settled into decorative formulae, devoid of the rather farouche expression of earlier centuries.

When paper was first used, the sheets tended to imitate the long format of palm leaf (plate 89). But as time went on a far greater variety of design became possible than on the rather limited format of palm-leaf. At their most extensive, in some of the 14th century examples, the possibilities of the palm-leaf went no further than a frieze-like processions of figures, say of white-robed ascetics being welcomed by rich laymen accompanied by drummers and a girl dancer, or an architectural setting compartmenting the leaf with its pillars, each compartment containing a single figure or a small group. Paper sheets of all sizes and shapes made possible broad designs dominated by large principal figures, every corner filled with smaller subsidiary figures, with mountains and rivers, their curly contours filled with trees and animals. Later still, when large paintings on prepared cotton cloth were made extensive schematic designs representing the order of the universe seen in the light of Jain theology became possible.



THE INFANCY OF A SAINT — W. INDIAN MANUSCRIPT — JAIN TEXT
INDIA OFFICE LIBRARY, LONDON.

These expansions of format were accompaned by an ever stricter reduction of pictorial space to the two-dimensional. The individual figures in various types of action were reduced to flat formulae with—apart from a few frontal icons—the ubiquitous false profile with projecting eye. The types hark back to the sculptural inventions of four centuries earlier. Buildings, and such things as the little pavilioned bullock carts perched high on their flowered wheels, are represented in pure side-elevation. Characters confront each other in stricly conceptual relationships. An enclosure or a lake appears in pure plan-view. All suggestion of the third dimension is eliminated. Trees appear as little framed cartouches of foliage. The lavish use of gold-leaf, which developed during the fifteenth century removes these designs still further from the realm of the natural. The suggestion of the real, even where the recognisable subject-matter is purely narrative, is submerged into the decorative intention.

Indeed, the purely decorative aspect of this art is fascinating in itself. At first the decoration was applied, as in so many other styles of manuscript illumination, to the borders, and in panels between columns of text. On these sites as time went on it certainly continued to flourish. But by the end of the evolution of the style whole folios were given over entirely to ornament. By the 15th century this ornament betrays strong influence from the Islamic world. One may legitimately assume that the mercantile connections of the wealthy Jain families of Western India would have brought them into contact with works of Persian sumptuary art. Certainly many of the diapered sprigs and the foliate scrolls are modelled on Persian prototypes. There are as well a number of figures in Persian costume, Islamic horses and birds among flowering trees; and, especially, little pavilions showing the Persian ogival multiple-arch. There is, however, no trace of the typically Islamic search for perfection of surface finish. This remains an Indian art, with all the vividness and irregularities of extempore composition.

By 1600 this style had been almost completely eclipsed by the Moghul and Rajput forms of album-painting. In the seclusion of the Jain libraries a debased and ossified form of it survived to make itself felt in the 18th and 19th centuries at such centres as Jaipur. During the 19th century painted cotton temple hangings continued to be made in a style visibly descended from the manuscript tradition. No doubt, such hangings had been in fact made since the 17th century at least.

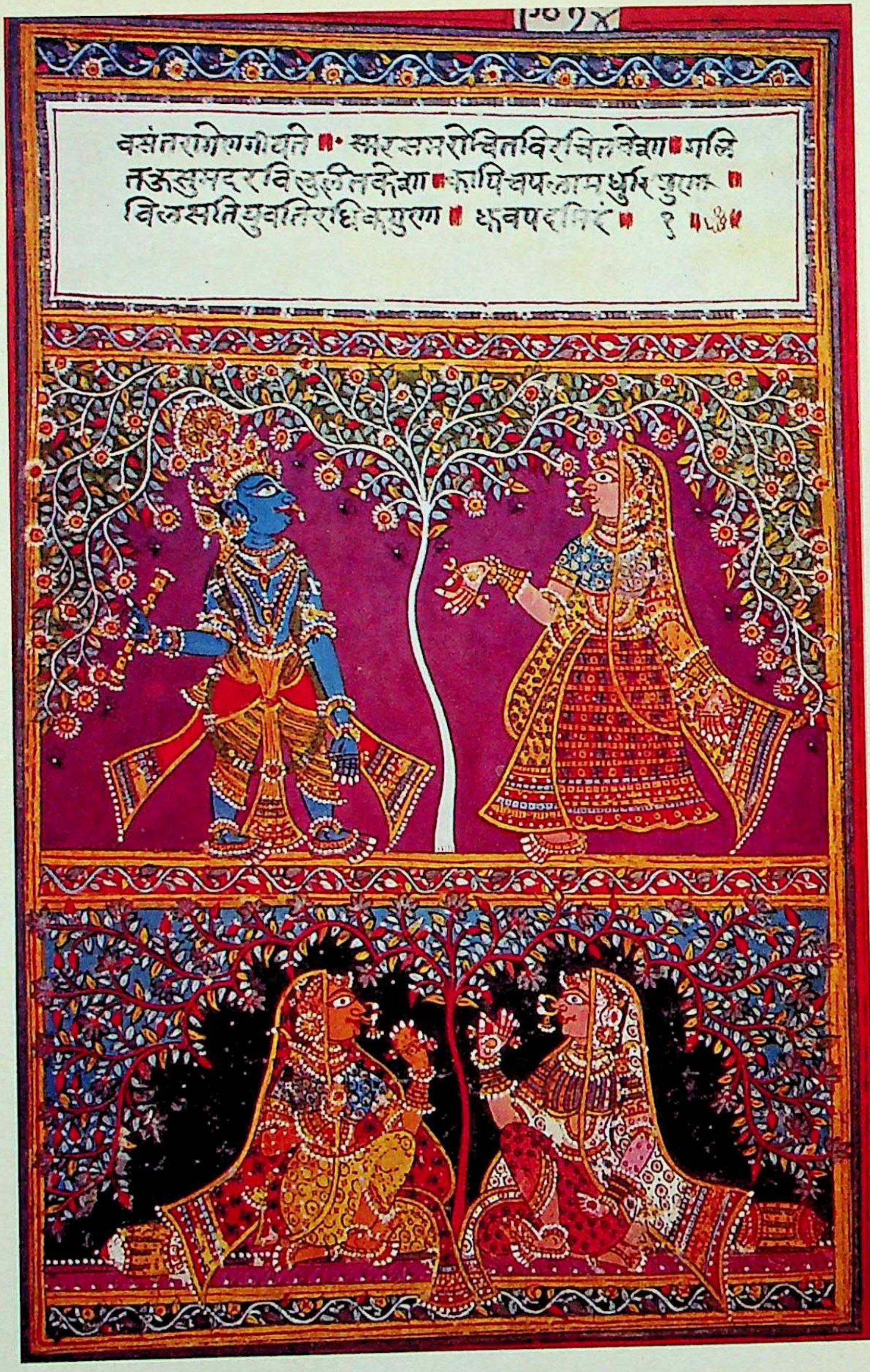
ORISSAN MANUSCRIPTS (XVIth-XIXth C.)

No-one knows how far back the tradition of illuminating palm-leaf manuscripts in Orissa goes. None of the manuscripts that is preserved appears to be older than the 17th century. But there are in the style of the drawing and the human types such distinct echoes of the sculpture of Konarak (ca. 1230 A.D.) that it is most likely that the tradition goes back, like the Western Indian, to the middle ages. In some ways it is surprising that the rather unsatisfactory palm-leaf continued to be used for illuminated books as late even as the early 19th century when paper had been available and in use for centuries. But Orissa has always been a stronghold of tradition. It was the last of the great Hindu states of the north to succumb to the military conquest of Islam. Hinduism was so deeply entrenched there, centred on the great temple cities of Puri and Bhuvanesvara, that a mere military defeat made little impression on the traditional way of life, which has survived intact right down to the present day.

The art of Orissa has deep roots in the past. Illustrative sculpture has survived from the first century B.C. During the middle ages a tremendous flowering of Hindu temple architecture and sculpture took place, when a parallel art of painting must have been practised. There are a few temple wall-paintings of mediaeval origin still surviving, notably that on the west wall of the jagamohana of the Lakshmi temple in Jagannath's shrine at Puri, supposedly 12th c.; and that on the walls of Jagannath's audience-hall, supposedly ca. 1500. The first represents the Vaishnava saint Ramanuja confounding the Buddhists, the second a romantic episode in the life of king Purushottama Deva. But unfortunately, as is so often the case at Hindu temples that have remained in use into modern times, the pictures have been repeatedly overpainted, and reduced to garish absurdity. There are, however, some tiny scraps of truly ancient painting in Orissa. On the caves of Khandagiri, rock-cut viharas with some sculptured ornament made probably in the 1st c. B.C., there are traces of lime base and colour. But nothing of the design is legible any more. At Sitabhinji, in Keonjargarh state, the ceiling of a rock-shelter still retains part of a damaged painting on lime plaster, representing a royal procession with an elephant and horseman. The colours and the design are closely reminiscent of the early seventh century art of Ajanta and Bagh; there is a similar conception of pictorial space, with figures overlapping one another in depth. Apart from these, the records of painting in Orissa begin with the earliest manuscript painting, in the 17th century.

Orissan palm-leaf manuscripts are made by a most unusual technique. The design is impressed into the leaf with a stylus, and the impression so made is filled in with ink or charcoal dust. Gum-bonded colour is sometimes applied afterwards, but not always. The colours are chiefly pale pink, lemon green and greenish blue with touches of red. In the 18th century paper began to be used, and the artists adapted their compositions and techniques to the new formats of paper sheets (plate p. 92). The manuscripts are usually illustrations of the erotic-devotional literature of Krishna—of which more will be said in a later chapter—such as the Xth chapter of the Bhagavata Purana, or the Dasa Poi, the Ten Idylls of Radha and Krishna, a work by the young 18th c. Oriya court-poet Damodar Bhanja. There is no attempt whatsoever to render pictorial space. The juxtapositions of figures are purely "conceptual". But in some manuscripts the whole story is treated in a long series of pictures, in a fashion strikingly reminiscent of the strip-cartoon. Even the series of amorous postures is meticulously rehearsed.

This development of continuous narrative clearly displays a debt to methods of late Chola inspiration as they survive at Tiruparutikundram. Such a debt to the tradition of the South is not surprising, as the literary culture of the Orissan court during the period immediately preceding the Muslim conquest was an amalgam of both northern and southern traditions, Telegu poetry being as much read as Sanskrit. And certainly the strangeness of the Orissan manuscript style contains many echoes of Southern art.

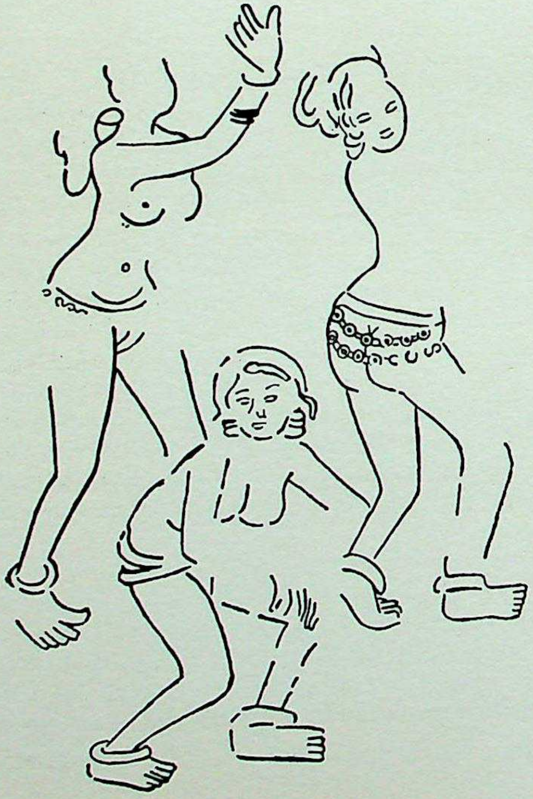

वसंतरागेणगीयते ॥ स्मरसमरोचितविरचितवेशा ॥ गलि
तकुसुमदरविलुलितकेशा ॥ कापिचपलामधुरिपुणा ॥
विलसतियुवतिरधिकगुणा ॥ ध्रुवपदमिदं ॥ १ ॥

KRISHNA AND RADHA CONVERSING; RADHA WITH HER CONFIDANTE
ORISSA — CA. 1780 — NATIONAL MUSEUM OF INDIA, NEW DELHI

Fundamentally the style is a local version of the somewhat barbaric schematic and purely linear method that developed in Western India and in Rajasthan in the late middle ages, when the old artistic traditions had been swept away with Buddhism. But southern influence reveals itself in the fondness for the stylisation of hard outlines into curlecues, for high ornate headgear, and for representing faces in strict profile. Spaces are filled with winding leafy trees, and in some of the paper manuscripts of the 19th century, which are more lavishly and brilliantly coloured, the whole back ground, as well as the clothes of the people, is sown with flowers, as the heavens are with stars. This is reminiscent of the Vijaynagar paintings at Lepakshi. The out lines are often ornamented with bands of colour or rows of dots, and sometimes, for emphasis, they are doubled. In certain paper pictures such as the well known picture of the Gopis on the banks of the Yamuna in the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta, the curved intersecting lines of the drawing have a springing quality, giving a strong sense of movement and life to the elongated figures of the girls and their attendant black-bucks. In the later illuminations, of the 18th and 19th centuries, the figures are far more squat in proportions and the lines have settled into ornamental loops and curls, pure richness of the texture becoming the chief aim. There are, naturally, occasional echoes of the more sophisticated art of Rajput illumination. Here and there a horse and rider in Moghul costume, a face peeping through foliage, or a multiple Muslim arch will call a post-Moghul prototype vividly to mind. The little ornamental shrubs, with their winding stems and neatly arranged leaves, are common to both styles.

There is one particular type of painting that comes only from Orissa. This consists of cheap paper icons of Jagannatha, often accompanied by his brother Baladeva and his sister Subhadra. He is, like Krishna, one of the forms of Vishnu, the supreme deity of the Vaishnava sect. The great temple of Jagannatha at Puri contains as its most sacred image an extremely primitive and abstract wooden figure, which is renewed according to the traditional design every 20 years. There are similar images of Baladeva and Subhadra. These icons have small squat bodies, with great flat, square faces, on which are painted large round eyes. The image of Jagannatha contains a very sacred relic, wrapped in leaves said to be a bone of Krishna, which has never been seen. To see it or touch it is death. The power of its sanctity is more than any human being can stand. When the time comes for the image to be renewed an aged and holy Brahmin is blindfolded and left alone in the shrine with the two images, the old and the new. Working by sense of touch alone he takes the relic from its recess in the old image and places it in the new. Thereafter he dies. Bhitaraccha Mahapatra, who effected the transfer in 1950, did indeed die soon after the ceremony.

At the temple tempera paintings on paper, and little wooden or bronze icons based on the original sacred images, are sold to pilgrims and visitors. They can always be recognised by their great saucer-eyes, surrounded by the loops and scrolls of ornamental garlands. Sometimes Orissan sets of the circular Indian playing cards, painted in lac, bear pictures of the three deities. Elsewhere in Orissa, at the temple of Ranpur for example, there are relatively modern wall-paintings in a style very close to that of the miniatures, illustrating the Krishna legend, but combining it with the symbolism of Jagannatha.



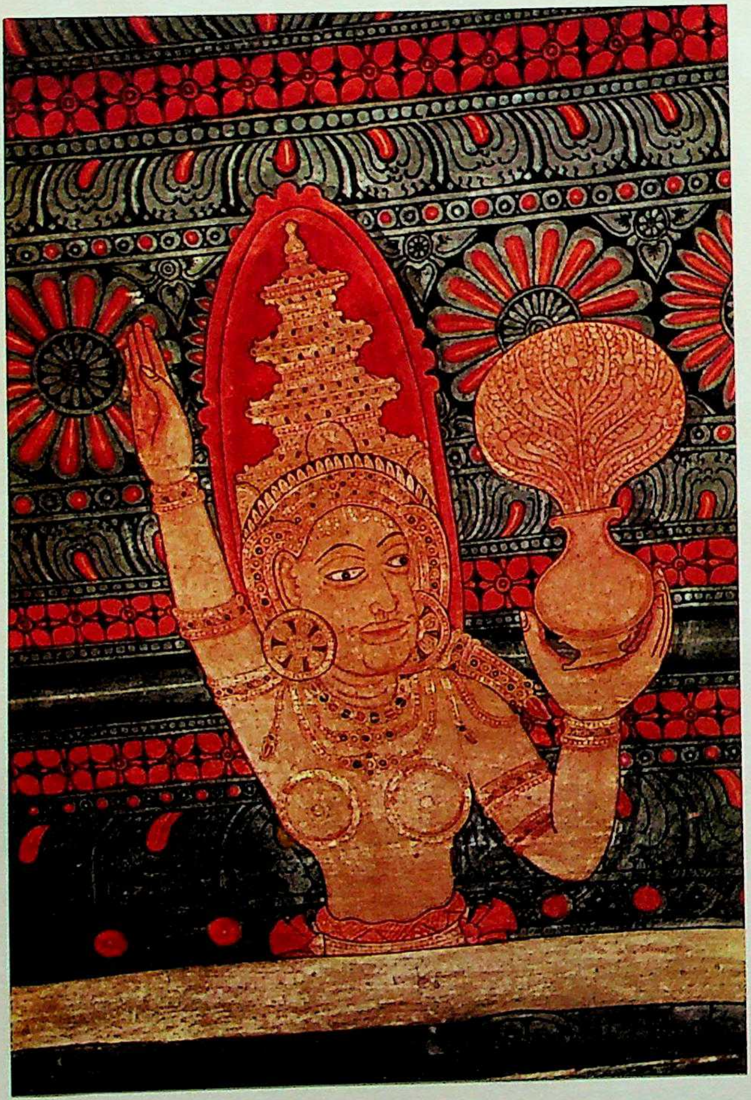
WALL PAINTINGS IN MODERN TIMES IN SOUTH INDIA AND CEYLON (XVIth-XIXth C.)

There was in the far south of India, in the states of Travancore and Cochin, a splendid late flowering of the mural painters' art, in a most exotic style It is impossible that it sprang into existence fully fledged. There must have been a continuous development of painting of some sort between the mediaeval and this later style of the region. Indeed many of its characteristics seem to have been directly derived from an unknown painting style very closely related to the sculptures of the Hoyshalas in thirteenth century Mysore.

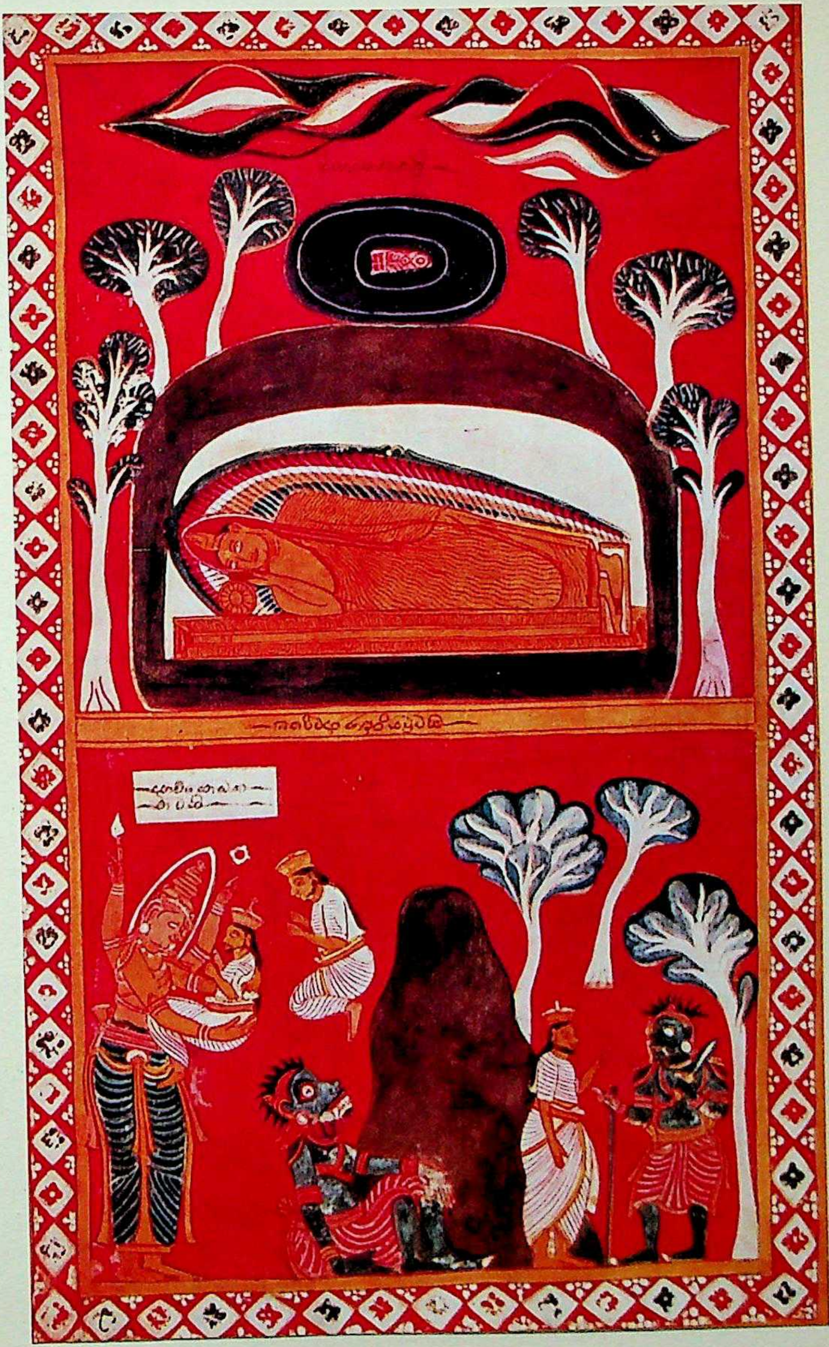
The earliest examples we know are in the Mattancheri palace at Cochin. This interesting building was erected ca. 1555 by the Portuguese for the Rajah of Cochin in compensation for an "error of judgement" by some of.their troops, who sacked a Shiva temple. There are, naturally, European features in the architecture; but there is nothing at all European in the great vistas of painting of Hindu legends in the corridors and halls. Nobody knows precisely when the decorative scheme was begun; but it is likely that a start was made soon after the completion of the palace. Work continued intermittently, it seems, into the 17th century. Then, in the 18th century a fresh series of murals was made, in a style very close to that of the earlier work.

The style of all these mural paintings is extraordinary, and characteristically Tamil. The designs are crowded and static. The colours, red, blue, yellow and green, are so intense and dense as to be dark in tone. There is simple contour modelling, but the black outline drawing is hard, and has a slow, deeply curving but not sinuous motion. It has none of the sensuous suggestion of the older styles. Curves tend always towards the arc of a circle, and the massive unit-volumes of the figures—legs, arms, neck—are virtually cylindrical. The wealth of ornament, so reminiscent both of Hoyshala work and of the decorations worn by the Kathakali dancers today, is carefully, laboriously defined as a vast collection of single units of form, not articulated by any over-riding principle of design. The major icons, postured and heaped with jewels, appear motionless. But here and there, for example in the little background scenes of coupling animals surrounding Radha and Krishna in their landscape of Brindaban, there is lively observation and skilful drawing. The faces, especially those of the cow girls and of Radha herself, or, in the Shaiva series, of Parvati and her maidens, are sometimes of a compelling sweetness and vitality. There are too passages of extreme and unusual naturalism, as where some of Krishna's Gopis are shown with pregnant stomachs and hanging breasts. There is, in places, a strong feeling for the qualities of unidealised, fat flesh.

The vast size of the decorative schemes is in itself impressive. The entire ceiling of the coronation hall is painted, and the long Ramayana series for example,



AN APSARAS WITH A FLOWERING VASE
DEGALDARUWA, CEYLON
MID XVIIIth CENT.



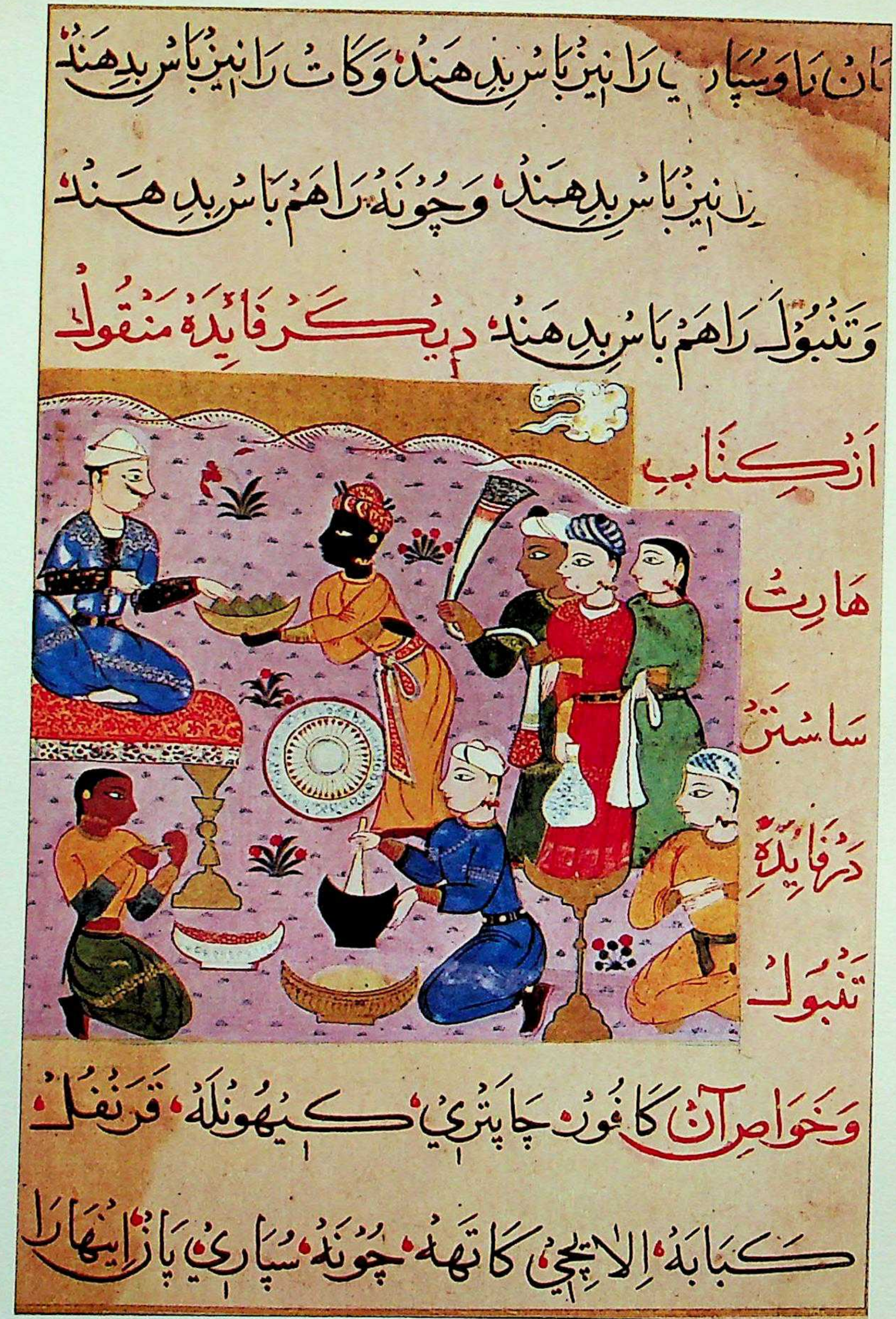
THE PARINIRVANA OF THE BUDDHA ; A BUDDHIST LEGEND SINHALESE BUDDHIST MANUSCRIPT — CA. 1800 in the room to the west of the coronation hall contains 45 scenes, covering some 300 square feet of wall. The paintings all represent scenes from Hindu legend. As the Rajahs of Cochin worshipped both the great gods Shiva and Vishnu, and a temple dedicated to each of them was incorporated into the palace, the painters had an enormous fund of legend on which to draw. There are Vaishnava series depicting the legends of Rama and of Krishna; and Shaiva series representing icons and stories associated with Shiva. The central personnages in each story are represented in a rather formalised fashion, but the hundreds of subsidiary figures, despite a tendancy towards squat proportions, show a good deal of lively invention.

During the 16th-17th centuries a great deal of work was executed in this southern style. In Cochin the Shiva temple at Pallimanna contains work of the late 17th century. The Vadakkunathan temple at Trichur has large murals representing the battle of Kurukshetra, at which Lord Krishna, in his guise of charioteer to Arjuna, uttered the Bhagavad Gita. They too belong probably to the later 17th century.

In Travancore are some splendid examples. The earliest, probably painted in the late 16th century, is a large mural 12 feet by 8 feet, on the wall of the gate-tower of the Shiva temple at Ettumanur. It represents a sixteen-armed Siva dancing on the body of a demon within a huge circular aureole. The whole circle is filled with wavy bands sown with flowers and snakes. Shiva is loaded with ornaments, as are all the figures of deities that surrounded the aureole as spectators of the Cosmic dance of creation and destruction. In a large number of other temples, and the palace of Padmanabbapuram, similar work survives. Many painted cloths and hangings were made in the same style, for temples and houses. These were much admired by the Moghuls, and exported in some quantities to the west as bedspreads and wall coverings. As time went on the forms of the figures of this southern painting seemed to become inflated; shoulders, legs and arms swell like the limbs of great trees, and decorative fantasy even overwhelms the contour drawing, which is treated with rows of dots or little "dog-tooth" points. Into this world of suffocating richness and endlessly repeated pattern the European finds it hard to enter with sympathy. It has, however, its own great beauties.

In Ceylon a style in some ways similar came into use to represent the gamut of traditional Buddhist subjects on the walls of Buddhist monasteries in and around the last capital, Kandy. We owe most of what remains in these monasteries to the patronage and inspiration of Kirti Sri Ràja Simha (1747-80). There was apparently scarcely a vihara of importance in the old Kandyan kingdom that he did not restore. This king and his brother, also a great patron of religion and art, were of Tamil stock, and seem to have employed Tamil artists from the mainland. For native painting may have suffered an eclipse during the later middle ages. The paintings in the Degaldaruwa (plate p. 96) are beautiful examples of this imported Tamil style. Their carefully planned figures, solidly delineated with rows, bands and tiers of repeated rhythmical ornaments, jewels, petals, tongues and leaves —their strictness is paralleled by the talas of southern music—are aggressively positive, in bright, hard colours.

In several monasteries variants of this style continued in use right through the 19th century. In others, as in the series on the life of the Buddha in the Dambulla cave temple, a far less ornate, primitive style, using violent colours and full of expressive "awkwardnesses" of drawing was employed. It recalls with extraordinary force the style of the narrative panels of Polonnaruva's Tivamka vihara six centuries older. It is likely that this simpler style represents the narrative Ceylonese tradition on top of which the Tamil style was imposed in the 18th century to produce the stylistic amalgam used during the 19th century on the walls of viharas like the Pahala, or the Telvatta shrine,and on innumerable devotional manuscripts and wood-panels (plate p. 97).



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وتنبول راھم باسربدِھند دیگر فایدہ منقول

از کتاب

ھارت

ساشتر

در فایدہ

تنبول

وخواص آن کافور چاپتري کیھونلہ قرنفل

کبابہ الاچي کاتھہ چونہ سپاري پاز اینھارا

THE PREPARATION OF DELICACIES — CA. 1500
NIMATNAMA. MANDU, CENTRAL INDIA — INDIA OFFICE LIBRARY, LONDON

ISLAMIC PAINTING (XVIth-XXth C.)

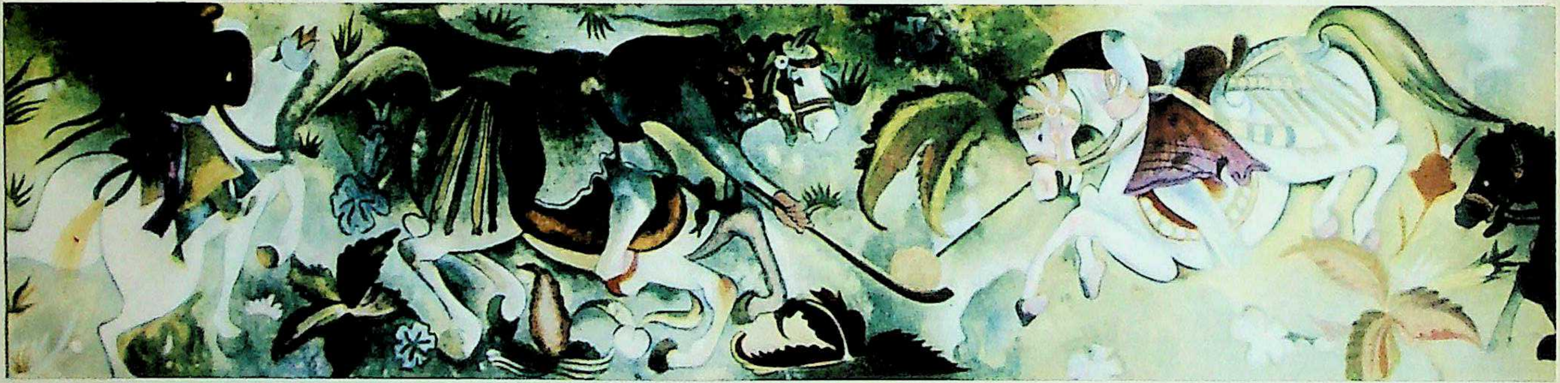
ISLAM entered India in the wake of military adventurers in search of loot and personal prestige. Mass conversions followed. Some were diplomatic, some forcible; others were the natural recourse of people whom the Hindu caste system kept in a state of miserable servitude. Most of the invasions came in through the passes of the North-West; and from the tenth century the seat of Islamic power remained for a time in Afghanistan. For the Turko-Afghan Moslems were not at first prepared to tolerate the extreme climate of the Indian plains. In 1206, however, the first of a series of Moslem sultanates was established at Delhi. The Moslem architecture with its magnificient carved ornament made there under the rule of the Mamuks, Tuglaqs and Khiljis represents a splendid achievement of Indian skill and adaptability. For then, as later, the Moslem invaders were obliged to employ native Indian talent for their artistic projects, though foreign designers must have been responsible for the broad plans. As time went on the power of Islam expanded, and over the whole northern part of India into the Deccan, independant Islamic sultanates were established, splinters broken off from earlier empires. In the course of four centuries of violent and bitter warfare, successive invasions and repeated sack, Hindu culture in most of the Panjab, Rajasthan, the Deccan, Madhya Bharat, Uttar Pradesh, Vindhya Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and the North of Bombay suffered severely. Some indication of the vanished glory of those regions—and of Moslem motives—can be gathered from the account of the Moslem historian Farishta of the raids of Mahmud of Ghazni. He describes the sack of Mathura : "This marvellous city encloses more than a thousand structures, the greater number in marble and as firmly established as the faith of the true believers. If we reckon the money which all these monuments must have cost, it will not be too much to estimate it at several millions of dinars, and moreover it must be said that such a city could not be built even in two centuries. In the pagan temples my soldiers found five idols of gold, whose eyes were formed of rubies of the value of 50,000 dinars; another idol wore as an ornament a sapphire, weighing 400 miskals, and the image itself, when melted, yielded 98 miskals of pure gold. We found besides a hundred silver idols representing as many camel loads." The ruins of this great city still await proper excavation.

On the expedition which he made in 1024, chiefly for the purpose of destroying the temple of Somnath in Gujarat, Mahmud found a wonderful religious building whose fifty-six pillars were covered with plates of gold and had precious stones scattered all over them; thousands of statues of gold and silver surrounded the sanctuary.

Loot was the chief impetus for crimes like these. But there was a secondary purpose. The violent puritanical prejudices of these Moslems led them systematically to destroy hundreds of Hindu temples, often at the expense of much time and labour. And sometimes, as in Ahmadabad, carved stones, even whole pillars, from Hindu temples so destroyed were used in the construction of Islamic buildings. Symbolic but childish devices were employed; as when the great icons from Hindu temples were placed beneath the threshold of a mosque, to be "trodden under the feet of the faithful".

In most of the greater Sultanates of India there was artistic activity of some sort. Mosques, palaces, gardens and tombs were built, and we may believe that some kind of painting flourished. Certainly calligraphy enjoyed the same exalted prestige it enjoyed elsewhere in the Islamic world. The calligraphic panels which were carved in relief on the stone work of the early Islamic monuments of Delhi were based on the work of great calligraphers. And through the centuries the custom persisted of applying beautifully written passages of script, quotations from the Koran, as decoration to buildings, wooden doors, sword-blades, dishes and bowls, and even clothing. This kind of ornament clearly preserves the underlying primitive purpose common to the ornamental arts of the whole world. For to the Moslem the Koran is the Word of God, spoken through Mohammed, his prophet. The Koran is thus the medium of direct contact between God and man, and the power of the divine imbues its every syllable. This power can be magically harnessed, as it were, by inscribing the words of the Koran onto objects. For example, the sword with a quotation of the Word of God inscribed upon it gains a magical effectiveness from this contact with the transcendant power of the divine. Amongst the Hindus symbols were consciously used in the same way. The "caste" and sectarian marks on the body, the lotus emblems on weapons, the apotropaic symbols on houses, serve a similar purpose. But amongst the Moslems, there was an additional factor involved. The beauty of the script in which the quotation was recorded was of the greatest importance. It was part of the duty of the Moslem artist of whatever kind, to seek to express the glory of God and his Word through the most perfect conformity with conscious canons of beauty. In architecture and ornament, these canons were expressed in terms of mathematical order, in the static concepts of geometry where Islam found the most profound expression of the Eternal. Hence the regularity and repetitiveness of Moslem design. In calligraphy there were likewise norms of perfection for the letter forms of the various styles.

In representational painting, norms of this kind were difficult even to conceive. Nevertheless, surface perfectionism in the leading of the elegant brushstroke, in jewel-like clarity of colour, became one of the characteristics of 16th century Persian miniature painting. In India, however, Islamic painting felt the pull of three different tendancies. First, there was the pursuit of perfectionism, drawn from



POLO PLAYERS — KUMATGI, DECCAN
EARLY XVIIth CENT.

Persian example. Second the native Indian fondness for cursive, flamboyant repetition of formulae harnessed to an illustrative intention. Third, the cult of personality, of "me" and "mine", which flourished at the courts of parvenu Moslem war-lords not rooted in the traditions of Hinduism, nor much concerned with the finer side of their own religion. Only under the Mughal emperor Akbar (1556 to 1605) were these three tendancies finally reconciled.

There is no Islamic painting in India that can be dated earlier than 1500. The sixteenth century was the formative epoch. And we must regretfully admit that we have never seen any of the large-scale wall-paintings that once existed in the palaces of the Islamic rulers. Early European visitors have left accounts of great audience halls brilliantly painted from floor to ceiling with hunting and darbar scenes full of life-size figures. Nothing like this survives today. We have only a few fragments like the painting in the palace of Kumatgi, Hyderabad. Here on the arches in a small pavilion, are several scenes, one the incredibly vivid scene of polo-players (plate p. 103). Far the largest part of surviving Indo-Islamic painting consists of illuminated manuscripts, most of them following the upright Persian page-format, and of miniature album paintings, individual leaves of a similar format bearing a single picture, and sometimes a passage of script. There are too a few paintings of a slightly different character that will be mentioned in due course.

The Persian art which exercised so strong an influence on the development of Indo-Moslem painting was refined and luxurious, produced chiefly to flatter the susceptibilities of the wealthy and powerful. Extremely popular were scenes of dynastic glory; ancestors of ruling houses are seated surrounded by their courts in paradisaical landscapes: legendary battles, where blood is lavishly shed, are delineated with elegant finesse against a background of ornamental rocks and flowering trees. Manuscripts of favourite literature—much of it concerned with heroic royalty—were laboriously illuminated for the libraries of the princes, as were works of history, itself often a by-product of royal self-aggrandisement. The many elongated figures were drawn without modelling, in suavely curving outlines traced by the point of a minute brush of kitten-fur. The colours, brilliant and very varied, were applied flat with enamel-like delicacy. The enclosed areas of colour were not based on geometrical units of form. Rather were they the product of the fluent contours that carried the weight of the artistic invention. The eye follows the lines rather than grasps the enclosed units. The tile patterns of palace floors are meticulously filled, and landscape backgrounds are scattered with sprays of flowering trees and clumps of flowers, the equal stress and colour of the whole scene removing any suggestion of spatial depth. (It is interesting that the all-over diaper or sprigged pattern for textile ornament is a Persian invention). Amongst this sophisticated splendour one often encounters with a shock the naked realism in the cruel Mongolian faces of tyrants and their courtiers.

Paintings of this kind found their way to India, probably in fair numbers, brought by immigrants, by mercenary officers, and by merchants. Some are still preserved in Indian libraries. Persian artists themselves came to India as well, but they remained Persian artists working on Indian soil. The fusion of Persian and Indian styles was achieved by native Indian painters, many of them certainly Hindus, who saw and learned from the imported Persian paintings, and studied, perhaps, under the Persian immigrants.

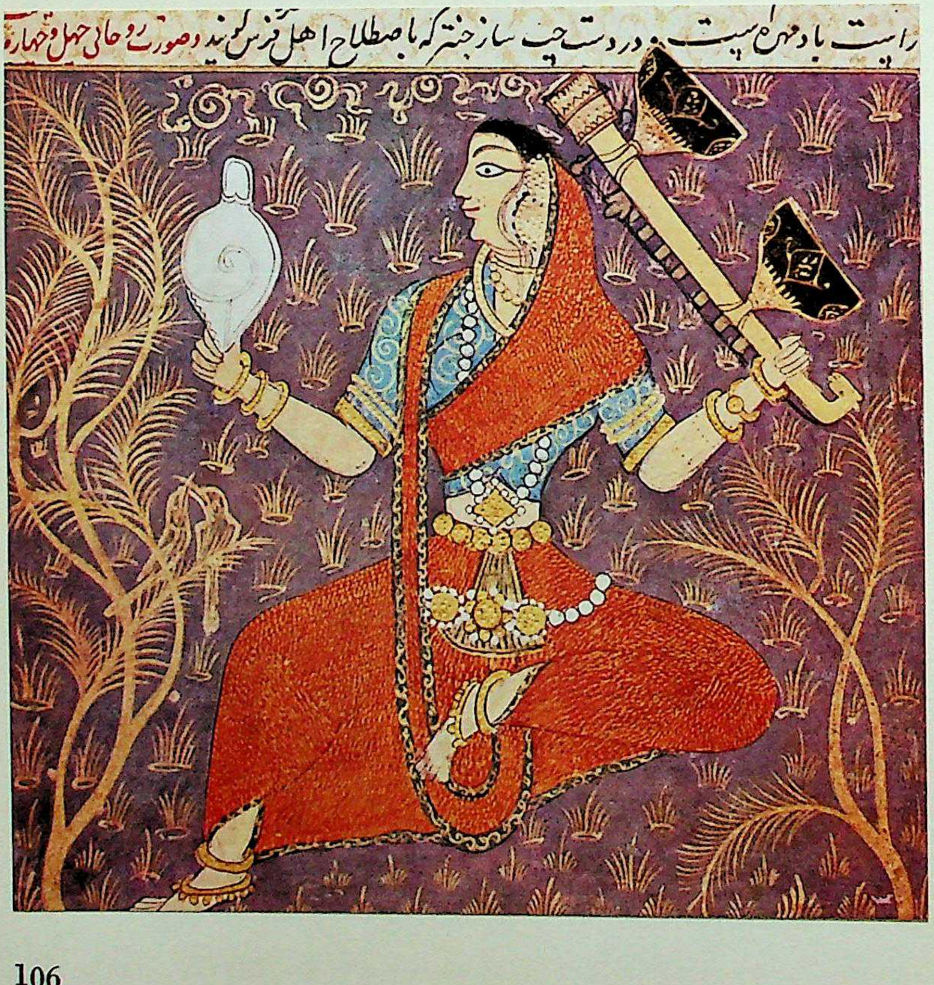
The earliest example of this fusion appears in the pages of an illuminated Nimatnamah (book of delicacies), a "cookery book", made probably about 1500 at the court of the Moslem ruler of Malwa. It contains a series of miniatures representing the Sultan supervising the preparation of various delicacies (plate p. 100). The basis of the style of these pictures is Indian. The figures confront each other virtually in a "conceptual relationship"; the heads are drawn always in profile, on a basic square plan rather like that of the heads in the later Rajput paintings of the so called Chaurapanchashika type: objects are seen in pure side-elevation. The drawing is only a little more than summary, but it definitely lacks the clear-cut conceptualisation of the enclosures characteristic of Rajasthani paintings a hundred years later. The Persian influence—perhaps from Turkmen Shiraz— reveals itself in a slight softening of the contours, in the garments of occasional attendant figures, but above all in the overall decorative sprigging of the ground. The culicues of cloud, too, have Persian overtones. But they also convey reminiscences of the cloud-cartouches of Lepakshi, in the Vijaynagar style; some of the female figures, as well, are closely related to the women of Tiruparutikundram.

The ruler for whom this manuscript may have been made was an interesting and eccentric character, Ghiyas-ud-Din-Khilji. His father, Mahmud, had been a tolerant and cultured man, interested in his Hindu and Moslem subjects. Ghiyas-ud-Din, after years of strenuous campaigning renounced the sword and turned to pleasure. He built a huge "palace of women", filled with fifteen thousands girls of different races. In the Nimatnamah itself, a book dedicated to pleasure of a kind, great interest is attached to variety of complexion among the attendant female figures some of whom wear masculine Persian costume. These are reasons for attributing its execution to the reign of this Sultan. Under the rule of his son, Nasir-ud-Din, we know that a Persian artist, Haji Mahmud, illuminated a copy of Sadi's Bustan written in Malwa. The successor to this ruler was Mahmud II, who figures in the history of Rajput painting.

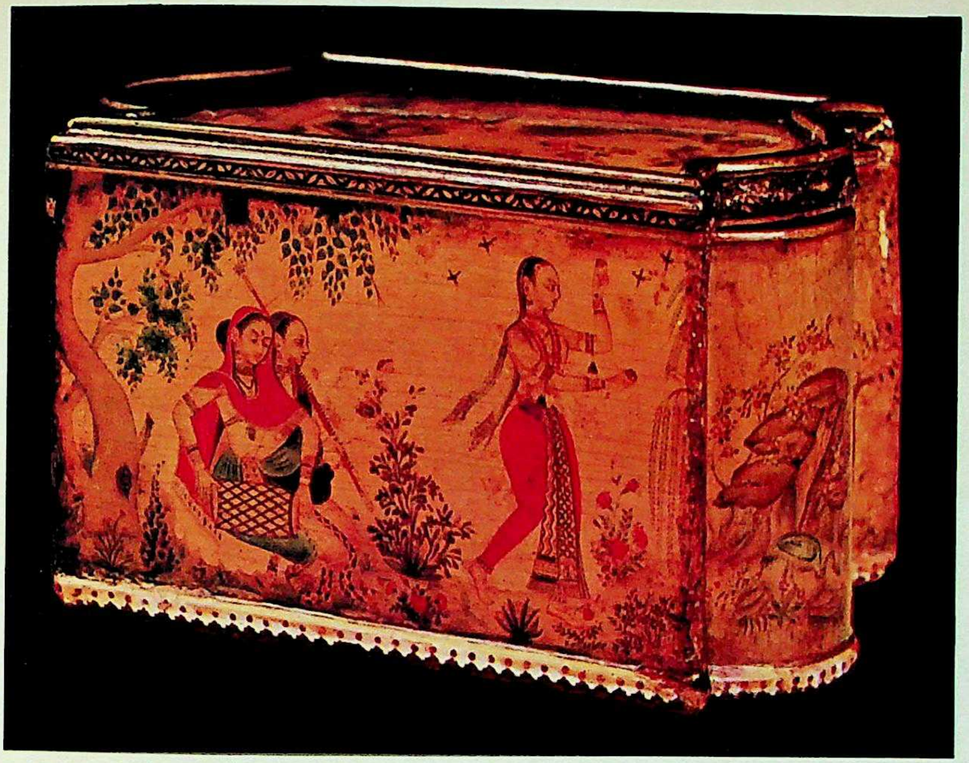
DECCAN

In the more important sultanates of the Deccan, Bijapur, Ahmadnagar and Golconda, a more distinct fusion of Indian and Persian elements took place. These sultanates were engaged in almost continuous warfare against each other and the neighbouring Hindu states of Vijaynagar, Telengana and Orissa. Yet they were far from narrowly Moslem and produced much first-class art. The Moslem architecture of Bijapur, under the influence of Turkish styles, with its fantastic onion domes, crenellations, and deep eaves with rows of blind console-arcades, is famous. Less well-known are the miniatures of Bijapur and Ahmadnagar where a profound influence from Hindu painting combines with Persian example into a style that played an important part in the formative stages of Moghul, and Rajput painting.

Many writers have referred to the influence of Vijaynagar painting on the painting of the Deccan schools. It was indeed immense, and it is probable that the defeat and destruction of Vijaynagar by an Islamic confederacy in 1565 drove Hindu artists to seek service at the courts of the victors. In such works as the series of illuminations of the Nujum-al-Ulum, made ca. 1570 for Ali-Adilshah of Bijapur, the format, the sprigged backgrounds and subsidiary figures only are Persian. The major figures, the feminine images representing the spiritual principles of the Universe (plate p. 106), are purely Hindu, echoing the types of Tiruparutikundram and Lepakshi with close fidelity. In the early series of Ragamala paintings—a term to be explained in the chapter on Rajput art—from Ahmadnagar Hindu elements are more pronounced. As well as the female types—which inci-


راست بادمهع سیت. در دست چپ ساز جنتر که باصطلاح اهل فرس گویند وصورت روحانی چهل و چهار

THE RUHANI SAMA HOLDING THE CONCH-SHELL AND THE VINA — BIJAPUR — DECCAN CA. 1570 — CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY, DUBLIN



PAINTED BOX — DECCAN — LATE XVIIIth CENT. — VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

dentally closely resemble those in the Nimatnamah—there are trees painted by the technique noticed at Tiruparutikundram, of laying on the dark mass of the foliage as a ground over which in lighter body colour the patterns of twigs and leaves are painted in. This technique was handed on, possibly through the intermediary of just such Deccani miniatures as these, to the artists of Udaipur and Rajput Malwa. Finally, the inspiration for the Ragamala series itself is Hindu. It is thus most probable that the painters of these miniatures were Hindus who had seen Persian pictures and were working to the eclectic taste of a cosmopolitan court. Some Deccan paintings like the Oxford Ragamala set ca. 1590 were actually painted by Moghul artists. But as time went on the flourishing miniature schools of the Deccan developed in contact with the Moghul atelier a style that combined the qualities of Indian and Moslem artistic thought into a striking amalgam. They learned to avoid placing their figures on a single base-line and to give some sense of depth to the picture by placing the feet of the nearer figures lower, those of the more distant higher on the page. There is even diagonal recession, if not true single view-point perspective. But they never developed the same sense of space opening out behind the figures as the Moghul artists did. Even landscape motives taken from Moghul painting are reduced to the status of ornaments applied to a flat background.

By the 1590s painting in Ahmadnagar and Bijapur had developed a most astonishing plastic force in its drawing of figures. The bulbous volumes of portly and overdressed princes are held within suave, deeply curved outlines; the fans of pleats, and long arcs of drapery recall the Vijaynager style; the "axial" shading, discussed later in this chapter and the use of "axial" pleats which reinforce the plastic effect, must have been derived from European example, perhaps through the intermediary of the Portugese trading settlements on the West Coast. Other European elements are there; glimpses of cities for example, that appear through the foliage of trees. In the pavilion paintings of Kumatgi, and in many miniatures, appear figures in European dress. To the range of strong and simple colours used earlier have been added pale pinks, greens and lilacs, and the lavish use of white and gold. Filmy white skirts veil the strong colours of pantaloons, their pleats making patterns over them. But above all, in these later paintings, we meet the overriding Moslem motive of naked personal aggrandisement. There are no gods or spiritual principles here. The men are real men, vested in glorious robes; the beautiful women are prizes, flowers in the Sultan's personal garden. The long series of Deccan portraits, single standing figures seen in profile generally against a pale green ground, the men often leaning on the characteristic long, straight sword of the Deccan, continues for two centuries. They are strongly individualised, but the type-mould in wich the portrait is cast is based on and is intended to recall the patterns of legendary Moghul splendour. Other Deccani paintings, as the 17th century wore on, came to approximate more closely to the refined and decorative work of the Moghul court at Delhi. In the best examples of this kind the like box in plate (p. 107) we can still see the signs of the true local style, dissolved in the refined and dreamy visions that hark back in their atmosphere to the emotional ideals of older Indian tradition.

MOGHUL

The truly great epoch of Moslem painting in India was the Moghul. A succession of emperors, who proudly traced their descent from the great Timur and called themselves Mongols—we read the word as Moghuls—maintained a royal atelier of artists of such distinction that its works were known the world over even during the 17th century. Rembrandt drew copies of them, and Archbishop Laud bequeathed a collection of them to the Bodleian Library in Oxford. They entered the Royal Collections in Paris and Madrid.

The first Moghul emperor in India was the adventurer Babur (ruled 1526-30). He was a man of great military and political genius and a distinguished Turki poet in his own right. His father, who was the Timurid ruler of Ferghana, died when Babur was still too young to assert his authority against the entrenched power of his nobles. Driven from his heritage, he turned his attention to India — a country whose beauties he did not appreciate, seeing it merely as an appropriate field for the exercise of his energy and ambition. In 1525 "when the sun was in Sagittarius" as his memoirs recall, he "marched into Hindustan". He carved out an empire and ascended the throne at Delhi. He seems not to have patronised the visual arts.

Babur's son, Humayun (d. 1556) could not hold the empire. He was forced to flee in 1540 by the Afghan Sher Shah. In 1555 finally he established himself again with a court at Kabul. But during his exile at the brilliant court of Shah Tahmasp of Persia he had developed a taste for the work of the Safavid illuminators, the pupils and followers of the great Bihzad. When he returned to Kabul he took with him one of these artists, Mir Sayyid Ali, a young man already well known amongst other things, for his work in collaboration with some of the most distinguished men of his time on a sumptuous copy of Nizami's Khamsah, executed 1539-1542, for the Shah's library.

When Humayun died, his extraordinarily energetic and gifted son, Akbar (d. 1605) succeeded him, and at length managed to re-conquer the empire of Babur, vastly extending its boundaries even into Bengal and the Deccan. He set up the capital in India once more, and built himself near Agra the fabulous white city of Fathpur Sikri as his capital. There he established a great library and recruited from all parts of his empire painters, illuminators and musicians to add lustre to his court. Mir Sayyid Ali, Abdus Samad and other Persian artists, whose names are known, such as Farruq Beg, worked for him. So did many Hindu painters whose names we know as well. In the workshop itself constant supplies of the most recherche and precious pigments were maintained, and the Emperor himself held regular inspections at which works of special merit were praised and the artists rewarded by bonuses and gifts. Painters who did not meet the required high standard were, no doubt, dismissed.

It is one of the characteristics of Moghul painting that the artists often worked on larger compositions as a team. One man would execute the outlines, another the portraits, a third the landscape and a fourth would add the colour. Working under these conditions it was natural that the artists, Hindus and Persian Moslems, should have greatly influenced one another, so that within a very short space of time a distinctive and unified style grew up. But there was another important element in the amalgam—European influence.

Akbar, that hard-headed soldier and diplomatist, had in his nature a visionary streak. He believed deeply and actively in the possibility of reconciling his Moslem and Hindu subjects in both the cultural and religious spheres. He commissioned the translation into Persian—the language of the ruling class—of the ancient Hindu epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, and other Sanskrit classics. He distributed illuminated copies to his chief nobles. He encouraged by his own example the search for a common religious ground between Moslems and Hindus, himself paying visits to distinguished Moslem Faqirs and Hindu Sadhus. Finally he developed a syncretic, monotheistic religion of his own, the Din Ilahi, which was to combine the best elements of each religion and supplant both. Regular Assemblies were held in a House of Worship. As every emperor's fad must, it had some success. Indeed Akbar was not alone in India in desiring a rapprochement between Hinduism and Islam. Such great saints as Kabir, the weaver-poet, aimed at something similar. But the Din Ilahi never provided a final resolution of the conflict, and it died with its imperial sponsor.

The breadth of Akbar's interest embraced even Christianity, of which he knew from European ambassadors and the merchants who were in his day visiting the East in increasing numbers. In 1578-82 and in 1591, and then again in 1594 Akbar invited Jesuits to his court to participate in the Assemblies. From the Jesuit point of view these missions were not a success. The Emperor's own personal anti-sectarian ambitions precluded spectacular conversions. But the Jesuits brought with them quantities of European works of art as gifts, paintings, Plantin's bible with engravings and other prints. The Fathers of the first mission reported that the emperor already had Christian pictures hung in his palace, possibly acquired through earlier contacts with the Portuguese. We know for certain that these European works of art were carefully studied by Akbar's artists. Many of their copies of European engravings and paintings are known; for example, coloured versions of Dürer engravings. It is likely that the realistic tendancy of the European works appealed particularly to the Emperor. Certainly in the works he had made in his atelier the elegant fantasy of the Persian style is toughened by a conscious attention to visible reality reflected in the use of finely executed shading. Indeed one of the most important functions that Akbar assigned to his court artists—a function that the later Moghuls continued to assign—was the recording of day to day happenings. In pictures of the emperor receiving embassies, darbars, battles, executions and such events as elephants running amok over a bridge of boats, realism was a primary requisite. Under Akbar's successor, Jehangir (d. 1627) the vogue for European objects and for realistic art became even more pronounced. Embassies bearing gifts of art came from the West. And there survive pictures of that emperor sitting on a throne whose back is made from a panel of European relief sculpture.

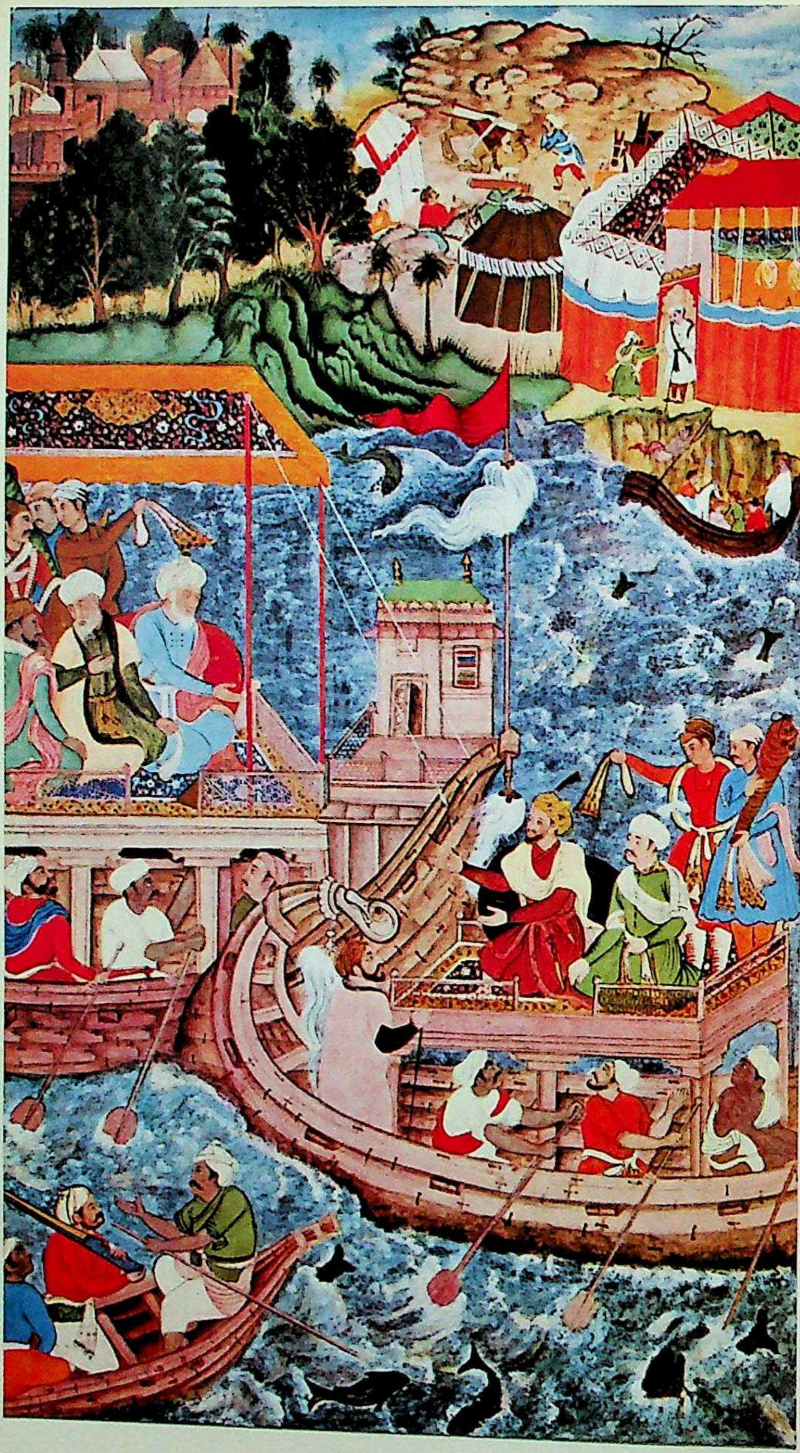
The history of Moghul painting begins with the works executed by Mir Sayyid Ali and Abdus Samad for Humayun and Akbar. Abdus Samad's best known surviving work is in the pure Persian style, a fairly large damaged painting on fabric of "Princes of the House of Timur" in the British Museum. It is a typical Persian court scene, with Timur himself enthroned under a pavilion in the centre, surrounded by his distinguished progeny. More interesting and far more important from our point of view, is the series of illustrations to the Hamzah Nama, the legend of prince Hamzah, which are preserved in London and Vienna (plate p. 113). They werc executed by Mir Sayyid Ali and a number of assistants between 1555 and 1570.

These paintings are elaborate narrative compositions on prepared cotton cloth, larger than the usual album-leaf, about 28 × 22 inches. The Persian inspiration is unmistakable. The types and much of the fluid linear drawing of the chief figures are Safavid. So too are the horsemen and soldiers, the turbanned princes sitting on carpets, the tents and pavilions of sprigged and embroidered cloth, and the ornamental shrubs and flowers scattered over the ground of the earlier pictures in the series. The drawing of the tree trunks and the rocks of the landscapes derived from Persian patterns contain many echoes of Chinese draughtsmanship, ideas imported earlier into Persia from the Far East. But there are many things that have been brought to the style by the atelier workers who shared the execution of the series with Mir Sayyid Alli. Here and there, amongst the several narrative episodes that compose each picture are glimpses of purely Indian inspiration. The "women at the well" are famous, and might have stepped straight out of an early Rajput painting. But there are other things; for example the foliage of the great trees with their bunched blazons of leaves, which seem to have been the contribution of artists trained in the Deccan style.

In the later pictures of the Hamzah series and in many other Moghul works of circa 1570 the European influence becomes apparent. There are figures reminiscent of the draped women of Italian Cinquecento art. There are distant views of cities seen in diagonal perpective, and massed clumps of trees that are derived directly from Western examples. And above all there is the technique of "axial" shading and pleat-drawing based on techniques learned by the Italians (e. g. Leonardo da Vinci) from Dürer's work and later adopted as standard procedure by European engravers. The plastic roundness of forms is stressed by the use of fine shading lines and folds which deny the supremacy of the silhouette and cross the forms, encircling them like bracelets. By their movement they suggest an axis at the centre of their rotation. Hence the term "axial". Further; the axes they imply are bound to have a three-dimensional force, since the "roundness" of the surface can only be indicated if the curves of the axial shading or pleats are visible as actual curves; in which case the axis itself must run into the depth of the surface.

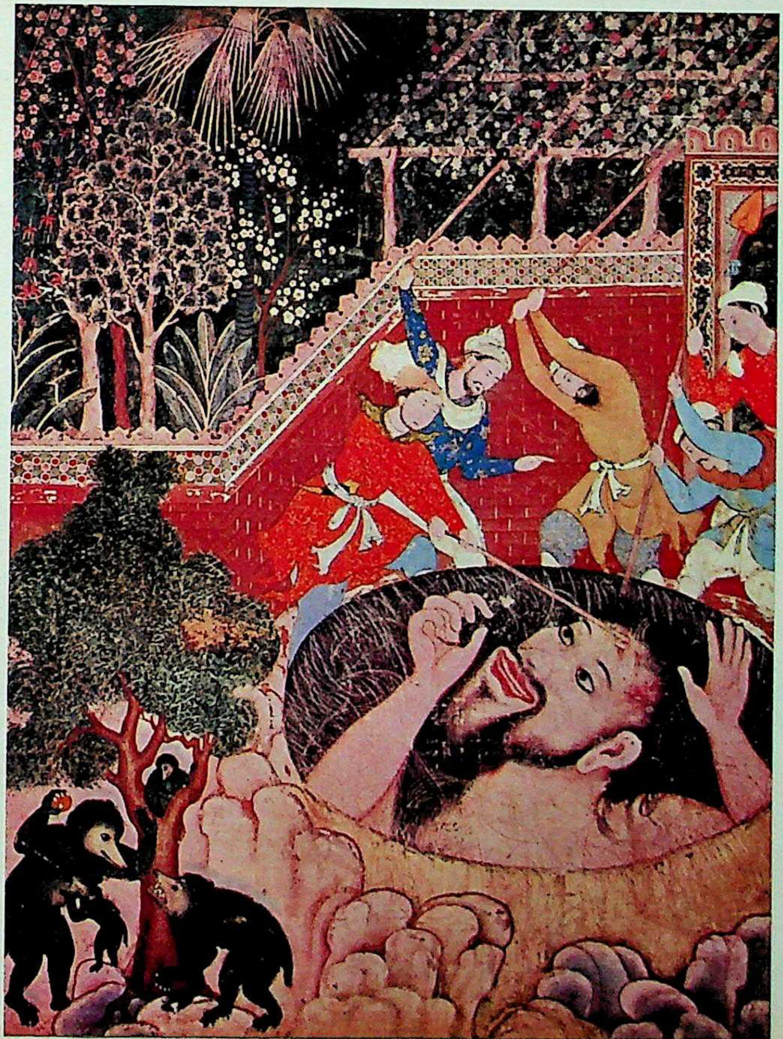
The typical painting in the full-fledged Akbar style (plate p. 112) is on a page of upright format and contains a multitude of figures, human or animal, in expressive movement, with strongly characterised faces drawn in an emphatic style. They often wear a curious skirted coat, with four hanging points. The figures form groups, and each group plays its part in carrying through the narrative. Objects, like buildings, boats or carts, are seen in three dimensions with diagonal perspective, not in simple elevation. The Persian element is retained in the even, over-all texture of very varied colours, bright and clear, and in the disposal of groups of figures over a background of landscape with a very high horizon line. The groups are surveyed by means of a continuously rising viewpoint; and the human figures preponderate in size over the inanimate parts of the design. The ground is not sprigged ornamentally, but scattered irregularly with natural features. The landscape contains strong suggestions of scale-perspective, without the fixed viewpoint of western "optical" perspective. This produces almost the effect that the picture itself is alive; or rather that the spectator himself is in motion experiencing the phases of the picture as a sequence in time. There are innumerable minutiae of natural observation. For all the Moghul Emperors from Babur to Shah Jehan, were profoundly interested in all aspects of reality, in faces and flowers, in the seasonal changes of the foliage of trees, in the character of the earth itself.

Akbar's son and successor Jehangir inherited Akbar's atelier, and his inquiring nature. Especially was he interested in the various species of plants, animals and birds (plate p. 115). On his annual summer visits to his garden palaces in Kashmir his artists travelled with him, recording the stages of his journey, and noting any unusual creatures. Their notes were worked up into elaborate paintings for the Emperor's album. Jehangir, who kept a journal, recorded a typical occasion, to which we probably know the actual illustration. Hunting one of India's few lions from elephant-back the Emperor finally obtained a shot at it. "With one wound



AKBAR'S OFFICER EFFECTING A
RECONCILIATION WITH A
REBEL — MOGHUL — CA. 1600
VICTORIA AND ALBERT
MUSEUM, LONDON

from my gun he fell and gave up his life. Of all the lions I have shot from the time I was a prince until now I never saw a lion like this for size and majesty and the symmetry of its limbs. I ordered the artists to take its portrait according to its real form and body". This kind of realistic intent went a long way towards establishing a conception of optically "correct" scale in landscape painting. It also did much to eliminate poetical feeling from many—not all—of the pictures made for Jehangir. It reached its zenith in the famous picture in Oxford of Inayat Khan on his deathbed (Plate p. 114). Jehangir's journal tells us how the emperor had the

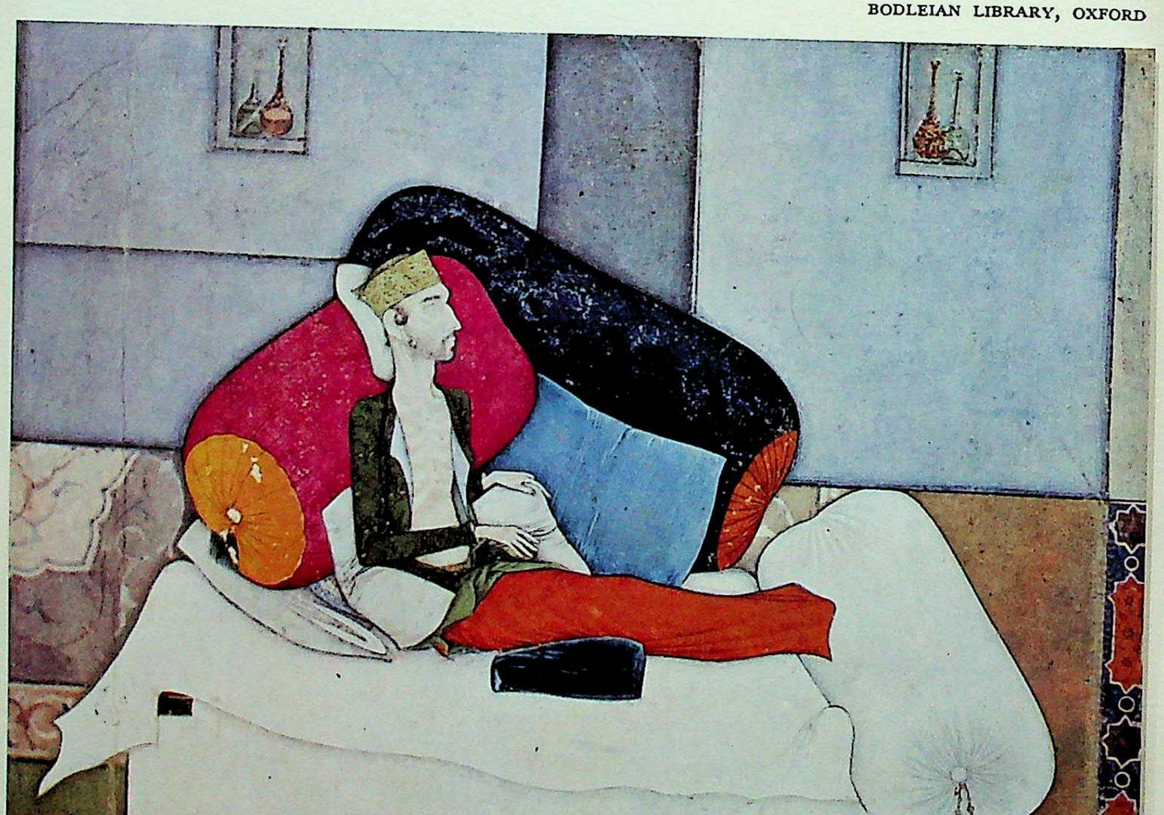


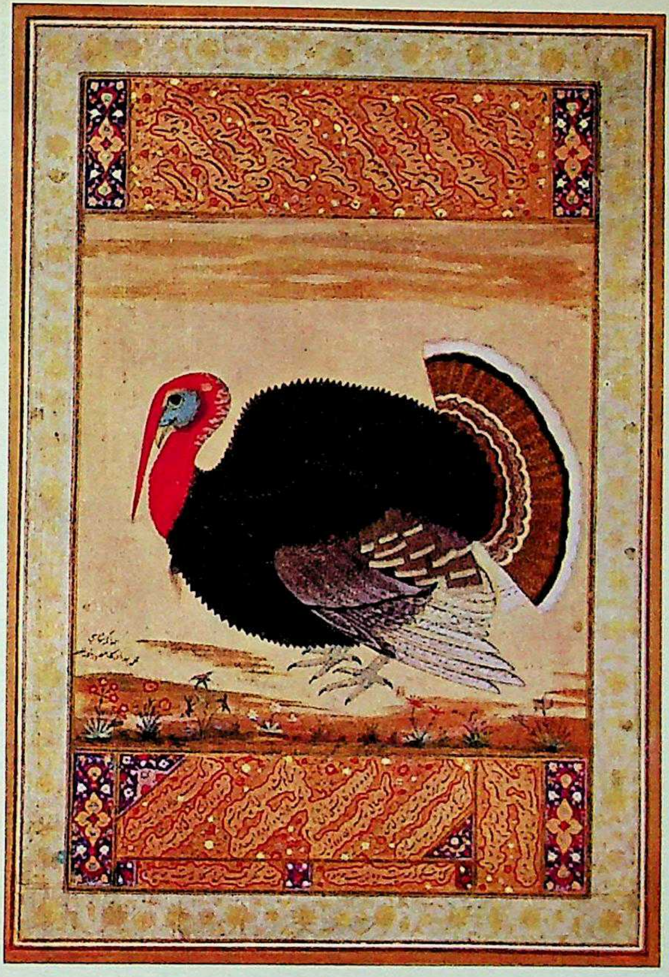
AN EPISODE OF THE STORY OF AMIR HAMZAH — MOGHUL BEFORE 1575
VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

Khan, who was in the act of dying from his debauchery, carried into his presence. The emperor was an interested spectator of the event, and ordered his artists to record the appearance of his dying courtier with the same dispassionate care as they did that of the dead lion. It is thus hardly surprising that the reign of Jehangir saw the first spate of that flood of careful, individual standing portraits which flowed from so many centres during the later 17th and 18th centuries.

Jehangir's successor, Shah Jehan (1628-1658) was much occupied with architectural projects. He beggared his empire to build the Taj Mahal, a colossal tomb for his beloved wife, Mumtaz-Mahal, who died in childbirth. In his time the arts

THE DEATH OF INAYAT KHAN FROM HIS DEBAUCHES — MOGHUL — CA. 1618
BODLEIAN LIBRARY, OXFORD





A TURKEY COCK
ALBUM PAINTING — CA. 1620
VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

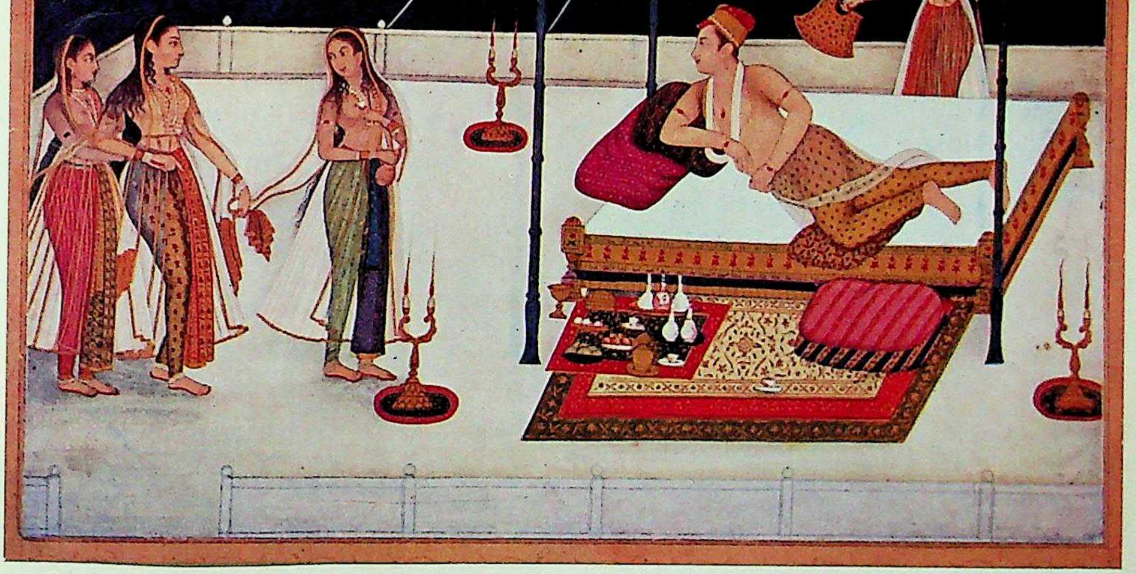
tended towards preciosity. Textiles developed small, elegant sprigged and open meander patterns, and the finesse of the pietra dura inlaid work of the Taj is much admired. Delicacy and polish characterise the painting, and a drawing-style of somewhat niggling exactitude devoid of much élan. For in his reign it seems that the numbers of artists had increased beyond the needs of the imperial atelier, and "Moghul trained" painters were driven to seek a livelihood as commercial free-lances without regular patrons. They tended to repeat accepted patterns in a technique dominated by surface finish (plate p. 117). It was probably under Shah Jehan too that the first of many "night pieces" were painted, perhaps in imitation of work by European artists like Honthorst. They included such subjects as lovers riding by moonlight, fireworks seen from the terrace, ascetics huddled round their fire, and romantically leaf-clad aboriginals hunting by torchlight; the mode quickly spread and stereotypes were set up.

In 1658 Aurangzeb, a bigoted Sunni, usurped Shah Jehan's throne and imprisoned him. He died in 1666. A man of violent character and at the same time narrowly puritanical in outlook, Aurangzeb spent his long life in endless arduous military campaigns. He seems to have dreamed of establishing the ideal Moslem state, a state where the arts were totally proscribed. But his treachery and pitiless warfare, the severity of his punitive measures and his total lack of tolerance fostered an intense opposition amongst his subjects and neighbours. Sikhs, Rajputs and Marathas were roused to the most bitter and desperate opposition. When he died exhausted in 1707 his empire was crumbling. In the 18th century the northern plains and their great cities suffered under the almost continuous warfare and repeated pillage of rival armies and peoples. Only the greater Rajput states retained their integrity.

Aurangzeb abolished the imperial atelier, and hounded the musicians from his capital. The painters were obliged to make their living as best they could. Under these circumstances what is called for convenience the Delhi school came into being. It survived right through the 18th century even into the late 19th. The artists were obliged to bend their great technical skill to the production of chic, accomplished and suave pictures likely to attract the eye of casual patronage. Their undressed girls swooning on terraces under the stars were self-conscious, accessible beauties, not emblems of transcendant passion; not Krishna and Radha, but prince and courtesan took moonlit rides or went hawking in fronded landscapes. The paintings aimed at flattering sensation, at giving pleasure by their enamelled perfection, rather than at arousing deep emotions. Endless versions of successful patterns were produced.

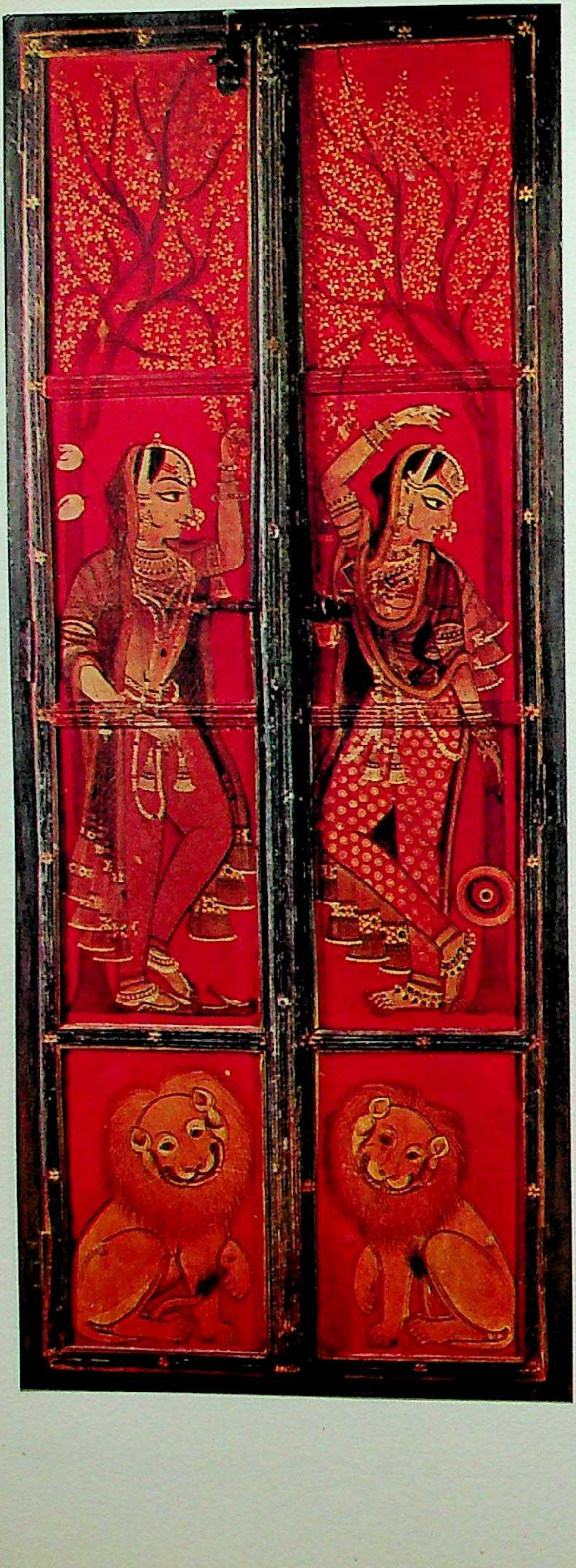
Despite their shallowness the technical accomplishment of the Delhi artists was very great; their ideas and methods exercised a strong and fertilising influence on the art of the Rajput courts during the 18th century. One can recognise again and again in the pictures of 18th century Bundi, Jaipur, Guler, Kangra and Garhwal motives like an embracing couple of girl-friends, an old woman with her sari drawn across her face, two seated musicians, bouquets of trees, that had been the standard "properties" of Delhi artists.

In fact the "Delhi" style was not confined to Delhi. In Lucknow, Oudh, Lahore and Bikaner, for example, its practitioners served any masters they could find, Sikhs, Marathas or Afghans. And "Delhi" artists must actually have migrated to Rajput courts there to revitalise their own art by contact with more robust sources of inspiration. Even in the twentieth century a few families of artists survived in the larger cities still capable of making versions of late 17th century prototypes that can easily deceive the inexperienced eye. In the European epoch such works found a ready market among westerners in search of picturesque souvenirs of their years in India.



PRINCE MURAD BAKSH RECEIVING A LADY AT NIGHT — DELHI — CA. 1660

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON



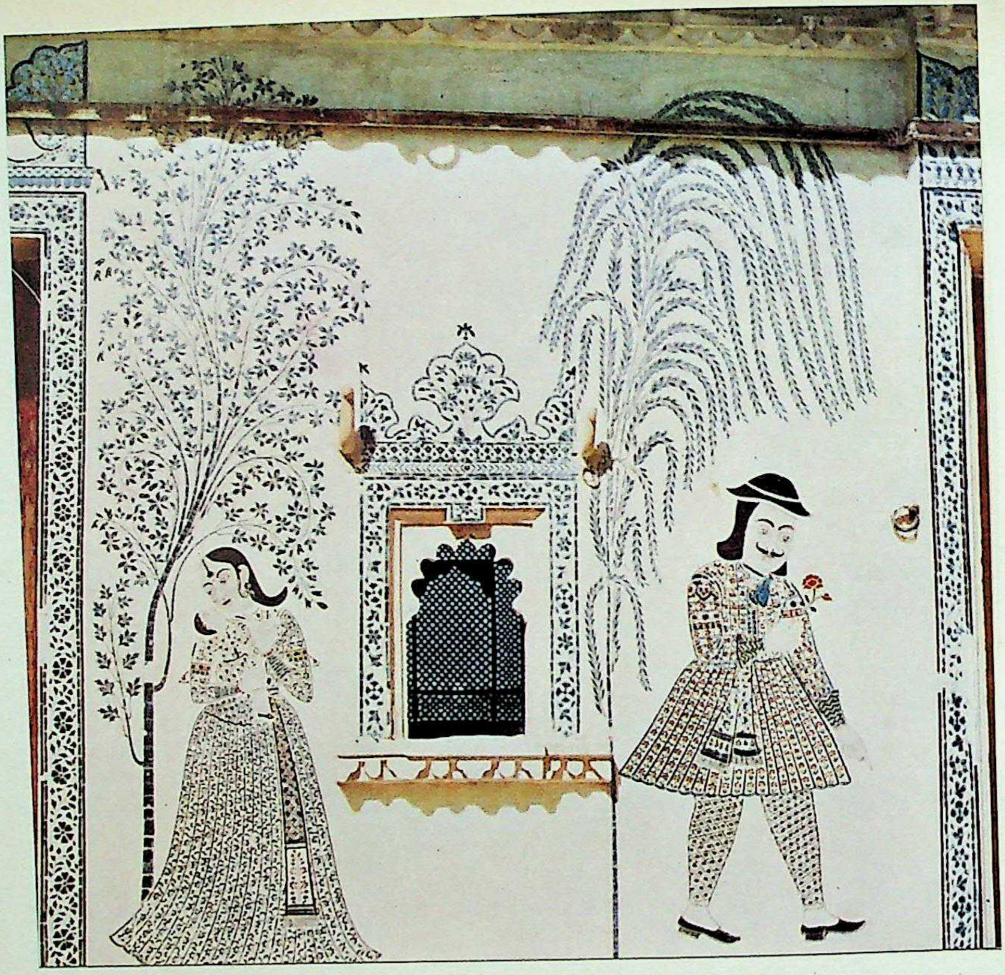
PAIR OF DOOR PANELS —
RAJPUT — XVIIIth CENT.
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF INDIA, NEW DELHI

RAJPUT PAINTING

The Moghul emperors, like all the invaders of India before them, did not attempt completely to eradicate the heredity feudal nobility whom they defeated. The greatest lords, closest to the court were, of course, Muslims. But a large part of the empire remained under the rule of native Indian nobles of the Kshatriya warrior caste, who called themselves Rajputs, "sons of kings". They were probably the descendants of immigrant tribes, like the Gurjaras, who had carved out kingdoms from themselves during the middle ages. By direct conquest, by political persuasion or in pursuit of self-interest these Rajput rulers had been brought to give their allegiance to the Moghul dynasty. In return they were allowed a degree of autonomy. They governed their own states, some large, some tiny, more or less as they wished, remitted tax to the central administration, and gave military service to the emperor. They were required, when they were away from the court, to leave members of their family at the capital as hostage for their good behaviour.

In their palace fortresses they attempted to emulate on a smaller scale the splendour of the Moghul court. Even during the early twentieth century, when that splendour was no more than a remote memory, Rajput princelings all over India, from Tanjore to Manipur and Gwalior, maintained a panoply of state copied directly from Moghul examples. Their turbans and jewellery, their swords and court manners, all echoed Moghul custom of the distant past.

Not all the Rajput rulers in Moghul times were enlightened patrons of art. And although one may legitimately assume that following age-long Hindu tradition, their palaces were adorned with murals, painted panels (plate p. 118) and the like, we do not know very much about this phase of painting. Many of the palaces still stand and it is strange but unfortunately true, that scarcely any scholarly investigation of their artistic possibilities has yet been made. Their architecture is fascinating and beautiful, and one cannot resist the temptation to believe that a good deal of first class pictorial art must survive in them, especially in more remote places, perhaps hidden under layers of whitewash. Here and there, as at Udaipur, one can see tantalising glimpses of what must once have been (plate p. 120).



WALL PAINTING OF A PALACE — UDAIPUR — XVIIIth CENT.

There is one type of Rajput art which is well known however. This consists of miniature paintings, generally on paper, excuted in gouache colours, that were intended to be kept in albums. They were painted by resident artists who depended upon the ruler for their patronage. His atelier was, like his panoply of state, another of the regal trappings he imitated from the greater Moslem courts, especially the Moghul. The pictorial genre itself, the album miniature, was derived *via* the example of Moslem work imported into India, from Persia. And many of the artists who worked at the Rajput courts during the later seventeenth century had some training in the Moghul manner, perhaps acquired during an apprenticeship in the Imperial atelier. It is interesting that some of the greatest Rajput painters whose names we know were Moslems though they painted purely Hindu subjects.

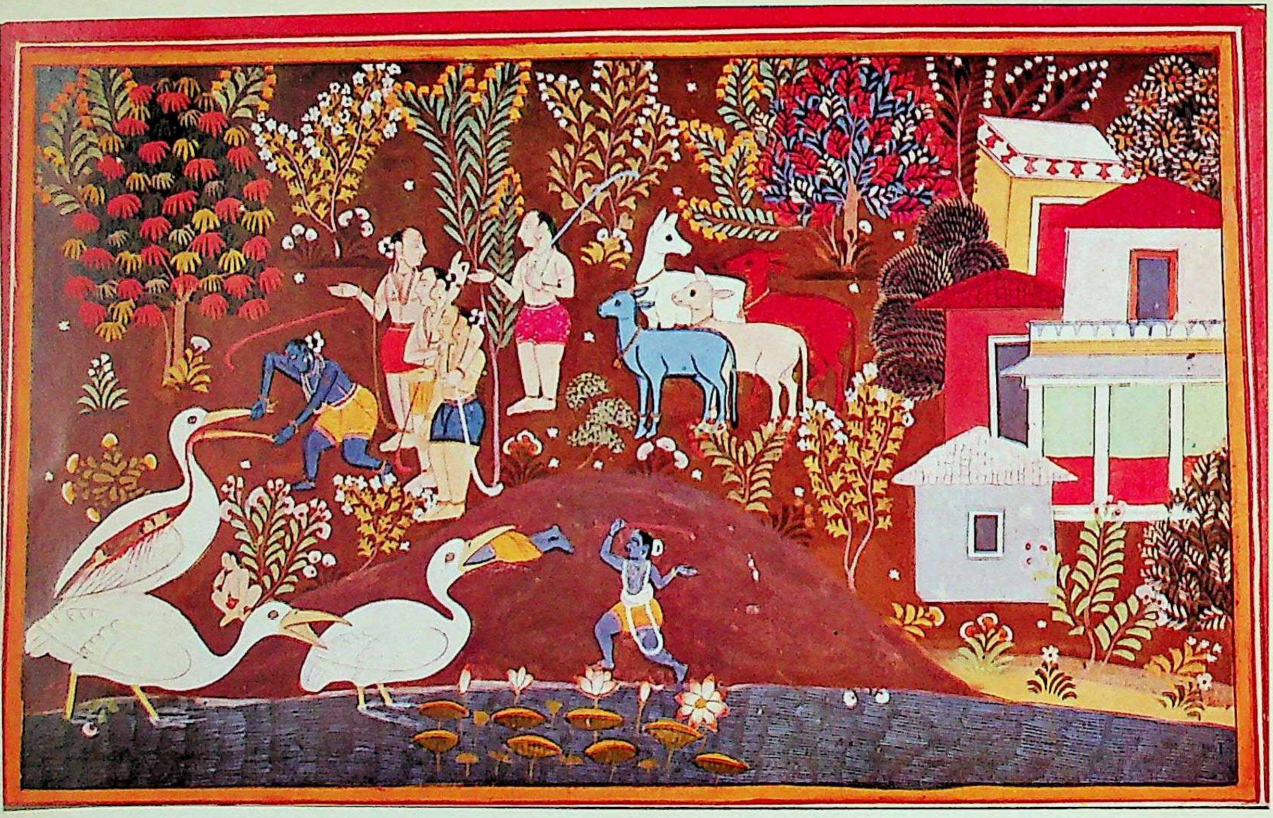
In fact much of the subject matter of the later Rajput miniatures is also derived from Moghul prototypes. The many full length portraits of men and women of the nobility; and, especially, the luxuriant landscape backgrounds on an optically "correct" scale which appear during the eighteenth century in paintings from the Panjab hills follow patterns invented at the Moghul capital. But historical record as such, one of the prime functions of early Moghul paintings, held no interest for the Rajputs. Dynastic pride was satisfied with a straightforward set of genealogical illustrations, an album of ancestral portraits. In general these are of relatively lesser interest. The great achievements of Rajput painting lie elsewhere.

Krishna

Far the largest section of Rajput art deals with the legend of the incarnate deity Krishna. This legend embodies perhaps the most fascinating and all-embracing cult in the whole world, and is deeply imbued both with sexual mystique and the most elevated theological speculations. It is impossible to obtain even a glimpse of the passionate intensity of meaning contained in the small, brilliantly coloured rectangles of paper which are the Rajput miniatures without some knowledge of the background and history of the tidal wave of religious emotion that swept Krishna to the pinnacle of popular devotion which he still enjoys today.

During the centuries immediately before the opening of the Christian era, amongst a people called the Abhiras who lived on the banks of the Yamuna river by Mathura, Krishna was worshipped as a tribal patron deity. These people were pastoral and semi-nomadic, living by their cattle. Gradually, in the course of about eight centuries, the cult of their god Krishna spread over almost the whole of India and came to be accepted into the Brahmanical system. Krishna was recorded as one of the avataras (incarnations) of the major Hindu deity Vishnu, the personification of the ground of all being. Precisely how this happened no one can yet say. Certainly the Abhiras in their wanderings may have promoted the spread of the cult but unless there had been something appealing profoundly to a deep psychological necessity of the Indian mind the great devotional movement could certainly never have happened. For there was nothing compelling Indians to adopt Krishna that was in any way analogous to the ruthless political urgency of the Christian churches which compelled many Europeans, and even unfortunate Orientals, to adopt Christianity. Krishna's cult spread by virtue of it sintrinsic appeal to the Indian spirit alone.

The means by which it did spread were at first chiefly literary or rather, in the genre of folk story. So far as we know Krishna's legend was only written down when it entered the sphere of Sanskritic Brahmin culture. In its beginnings it must have lain outside the Brahmin pale. Certainly the Abhiras were of humble caste, and even after Krishna's official recognition by Brahmanism, the erotic nature of his cult made him an uncomfortable member of the Brahmin family of gods. The basis of Krishna's cult at the tribal level was probably a springtime festival, with its music and dancing, and its songs, which were extremely licentious. There are



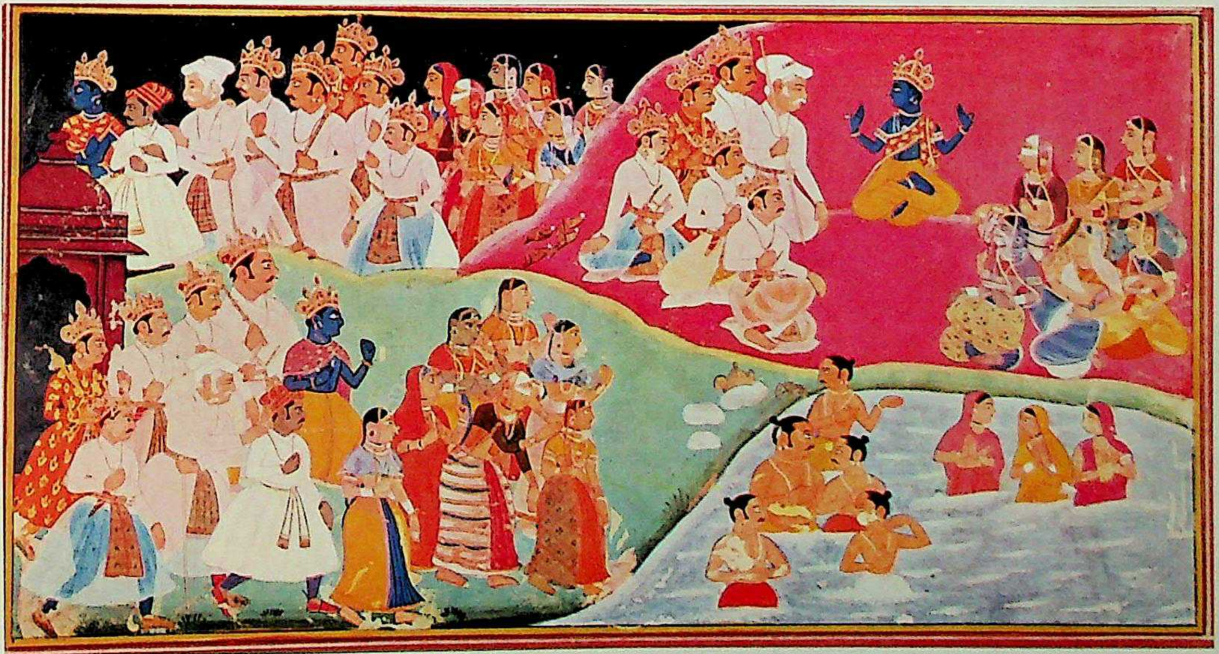
THE YOUNG KRISHNA SAVING THE COWHERDS FROM THE CRANE-DEMON — UDAIPUR — CA. 1720
GOPI KRISHNA KANORIA COLLECTION, CALCUTTA

many festivals of this kind known and recorded from many parts of the world. At the present day, Krishna's cult still retains its intimate connection with music and dancing, its literature with springtime and passionate love: and its great annual festival "Holi", in mid-March, is the occasion of wild festivity when people of all kinds, high and low, rich and poor, squirt each other with symbolical coloured water, or pink, yellow and red powders. The Holi processional songs are still very frank sexually, and there can be little doubt that this outburst of sexual imagery represents the deliberate unleashing throughout society of the sudden access of springtime energy, in which Indians, like many other peoples, have recognised the afflatus of the Divine. In a personal sense no less than in the cosmic, as we shall see.

Today we only know the early Krishna legend as it has been recorded in Sanskrit literature of the early middle ages. The Sanskrit scholars, we can be sure, were interested chiefly in Krishna's lineage, the "factual" history of his life and the doctrine attached to it. They recognised but somewhat devalued the emotional elements which were the chief reason for Krishna's popularity. These survived on their own account to fertilise the later mediaeval vernacular literatures on the cult of Krishna, whose richness is one of the crowning glories of Indian culture.

The legend as we now have it contains many accretions. Parts of it, especially those recording the god's victories over various "demons" or deities, clearly reflect something of the historical progress of the cult. Krishna himself is essentially a folk hero of great charm, a doer of good, friend of his followers, enemy to their enemies. But around him there is gathered the aura of divinity in the Indian sense with all its various emotional overtones. It is indeed said that the followers of Krishna can love him as child, wife, mother, husband or heroic companion at their own choice. But they must love him. Their love can be of the fullest, most frankly sexual kind. And it will be to them the purest delight. As can be seen in all the paintings, Krishna's natural habitat is the landscape of spring, where love prevails, all is joy, and Krishna himself ensures that nothing disturbs the enchantment of the world.

KRISHNA AND BALARAMA PREPARING FOR A CEREMONIAL BATH — UDAIPUR — CA. 1680
GOPI KRISHNA KANORIA COLLECTION, CALCUTTA



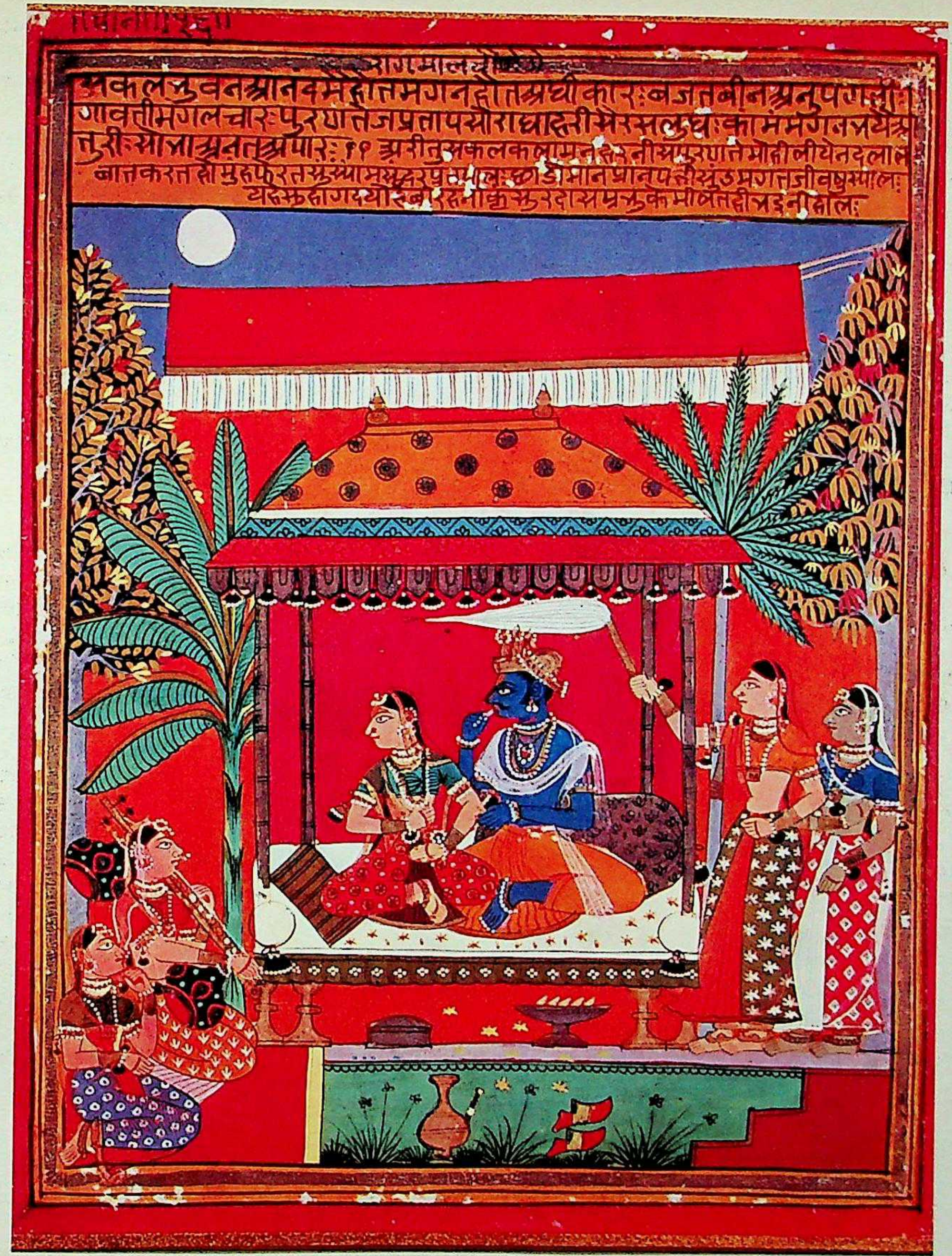
He was born the son of Vasudeva and Devaki. His half-brother, Balarama, who was born to another of Vasudeva's wives, is also recognised as a divine incarnation of the great serpent Ananta, symbol of the negative ground of Eternity, on whom Vishnu sleeps, out beyond time and the manifest world. The king at Mathura, Kamsa, a horrible tyrant, had been warned by a voice from heaven that his death would come by a child of Vasudeva's wife, Devaki. He therefore conducted a hideous inquisition and massacred Devaki's children one by one. But by devious means the divine child, the seventh, was saved from death at Kamsa's hands, and was handed over to the care of Yasodha, wife of the cowherd Nanda among the lowly Abhiras on the other side of the river Yamuna, at Brindaban. There Krishna grew up in peace and safety. Today Brindaban is one of the most sacred spots in India, full of temples and crowded with devotees, many of them Sannyasis who have come to end their lives where Krishna lived out his.

During his childhood Krishna performed many prodigies of valour and strength. As a baby he kicked to pieces a heavy cart under which his mother had laid him out of the sun and on which a demon had settled; he dragged over two trees under which two Yakshas had been imprisoned by a spell. He killed a donkey-demon, a bull-demon, a crane-demon, (plate p. 122) and the many headed serpent-demon, Kaliya, whose presence was polluting the waters of the holy Yamuna. He worsted the ancient Brahmin ruler of Heaven, Indra, the Indian equivalent of the classical Zeus, by holding up on one finger the mountain Govardhana to shelter his people from the stupendous rainstorm with which Indra intended to destroy them. The earliest known work of art devoted to Krishna, a sculptured icon in the pink sandstone of Mathura (ca. 350 A.D.) shows this last aspect of Krishna, "Govardhandhara"; it is a triumphant snub to orthodoxy. On the same icon, his aspect as god of the increase of cattle—itself how significant in India—is indicated by the small figure of a bull covering a cow.

When he had attained young manhood, Krishna performed his ultimate task of heroism. Going to a festival where king Kamsa was watching wrestling in a compound, Krishna and Balarama, two slightly built and handsome youths, first of all defeated Kamsa's mountainous professional wrestlers. Then, to crown the exhibition, Krishna leapt on to Kamsa's royal balcony and flung the tyrant down to his death.

This is the heroic side of Krishna, incarnate god. (plate p. 123) It is the side which was most often represented in the temple carvings of the early middle ages. Then, a little later, the other charming side came into prominence, and there gathered that great wave of popular emotion which culminated in the lives of the great saints Chaitanya and Vallabha, who about 1500 acquired an immense following.

This other side stresses episodes of charming naughtiness in Krishna's childhood when, for example, he steals butter from his mother's churn for himself and his friends. Then, as he grows up he becomes as a youth so divinely beautiful, such a transcendant musician on his flute, that all the married women and girls of the Abhiras - the Gopis or cowgirls - cannot help falling in love with him. They watch for him whenever he goes out, or comes home at sunset, driving his father's cattle at the "hour of cowdust". He plays tricks on them. He makes them pay toll of their milk and buter. One day, while the Gopis are all bathing together in the



KRISHNA AND RADHA SEATED AT NIGHT UNDER A CANOPY — UDAIPUR — CA. 1650
GOPI KRISHNA KANORIA COLLECTION, CALCUTTA

Yamuna naked, he steals their clothes and climbs a tree. When they discover his theft he teases them for their modesty and forces them to come up out of the water to him, to raise their hands and uncover their secret parts before he will let them have back their clothes.

The culmination of his prolonged love affair with the village girls is the occasion of the "round dance", at the springtime festival. One day he is playing his flute. Gradually the fascination of his music gathers around him the women of Brindaban. He leads them into the forest, then suddenly vanishes. In passionate despair they run through the dense undergrowth, tearing their bare feet on thorns, their bodies and their clothes on briars, wailing and calling for him. Suddenly he reappears, and they are content. They gather in a circle round him and to the music of his flute they dance the round dance, Rasalila. During it, each one of them is sure that Krishna is dancing, and finally making love, with her alone. But this magical self-multiplication is not the only magic Krishna employed. Later legends relate, obviously to combat a logistic complication, that whilst the girls were with Krishna, by his powers he projected into her own home an image of each of them who was married, so that her husband believed she was in fact there.

An interesting extension to the Krishna legend, in later times forming the second part of his life story, but which is obviously a parallel development of a rather less socially scandalous character, represents Krishna as abandoning his humble village girls after Kamsa's death, and becoming king himself. Enthroned, he marries 85,000 wives, as an Eastern monarch may, and satisfies each of them by the exercise of this same self-multiplying power. His "death" was a willed one.

In fact it was the scandalous episodes in Brindaban with the Gopis that occupied the imagination of Indian poets and theologians. From the time of the great Gita Govinda, by Jayadeva (later 12th c. A.D.), in most of the vernacular languages of India, an enormous quantity of violently amorous love-poetry was produced which dealt with all the possible minutiae of physical passion, with desertion, despair, hope, anticipation, all imaginable enjoyments and delights; with toilet, clothing, disordered dress; with lingering glances, legs heavy with passion, small pink-palmed wandering hands, kisses like bees plunging into the perfumed clouds of black hair. In most of this poetry one of the Gopis above all is represented as the chief love of Krishna; Radha, the wife of cowherd Ayanaghosha. She is the heroine (plate p. 125) of far the greatest number of poems and paintings and her great beauty and passion are the subject of innumerable rhapsodies.

With her jewels abundant her limbs she adorns and spreads out her bed
Imagining you on her fluttering couch of leaves,
And so to indulge, in a hundred ways, in the sport of love
She is fully resolved, arranging her bed with every adornment;
Not another night may that beautiful girl endure without you.
Why so much apathy, Krishna, beside the fig tree ?
O brother, why not go to the pasture of eyes, the abode of bliss ?

One point that anyone looking at Rajput paintings will notice is that Krishna is shown as having a dark-blue complexion. No one knows any single reason for this. But the most probable explanation is that "Krishna", which means "the dark one", was a name this god was given in Hindu society by reason of his lowly origin among the Abhiras. Generally speaking, lightness of skin colour is accepted as a natural concomitant of high caste, darkness with low. But Krishna appears in these paintings not simply as dark, but as blue. The blue must contain a reference to his spiritual prototype, Vishnu, whose incarnation he is, and whose most subtle and pervading presence supplies the ground of being for all that exists. Vishnu's symbolic colour is blue, the colour of the empty sky.

Since Krishna is indeed recognised as incarnate God, his legend cannot simply be regarded as a saucy tale. It never was regarded as anything but a most profound allegory of the relationship of humanity to God, and the passion of sexual love the art depicts is, like the love imagery employed by the great European mystics, a transcendant relationship, for which there is no other possible expression. In India this type of religion, the attitude of Bhakti, demands the highest emotions of which man is capable. But since these are rarely achieved, and since language is made in the market place, the resources of language offer only the imagery of physical love for the mystic's use.

India, however, is a land of extremes. Moreover it is a land where age-long tradition regards the things that compose the world as intrinsically devoid of reality, as real only by virtue of a transcendental power perpetually at play presenting them. Form is apparent; only the transcendant Real is real. The principle of form is part only of the Real. Since, to the followers of Krishna, the Real personified in the God Vishnu, made himself apparent in a contingent form as Krishna, this contingent form provides, as it were, a pathway or an opening into the transcendant Real. Earnest, self-abandoning devotion, an attachment that rejects as the Gopis did all considerations of shame, comfort and social decency, can lead the human soul out of everyday humanity into the transcendant by the same path or opening as God entered the everyday world, in the guise of Krishna. Everyday things, devoid of intrinsic reality, serve simply as symbols, which those who know how to read and use may turn to their own ends. Among the followers of Krishna, there arose many curious extremes of ritual.

Some dedicated men, for example, dressed themselves as women, and even lived the lives of women to the extent of observing a few days of retirement each month. In this way they lived out to the limit their adopted role of Gopis vis-à-vis God. "All souls are feminine to God !" Others sought the extremes of emotion by arousing in themselves violent sexual desires which, deprived of their normal end of orgasm, were converted into a kind of spiritual rocket-fuel. Such was the Bengali Brahmin poet Chandidas, who, legend says, travelled about with Rami, a beautiful, very low-caste girl whom he adored, dressed, caressed and made love to without natural fulfilment, thus denying both the claims of flesh and society. Such also were the Sahajiyas, many of them followers of Vallabha, who used rituals of sexual intercourse for the same purpose. In these relationships the part of the woman, who personified Radha, was as exalted as that of the man. The history of one school of Rajput painting in particular, that of Kishangarh, offers a splendid example of the religious bond established between man and woman by their own sexual relationship in combination with the cult of Krishna.

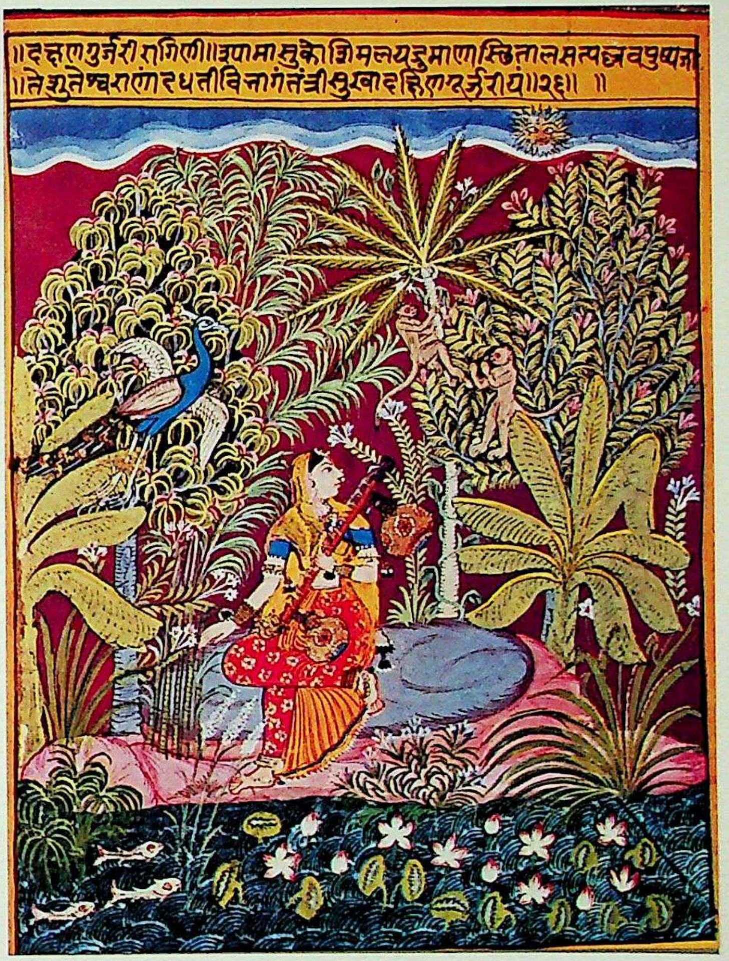
Music and dancing were very much cultivated by followers of Krishna for the purpose of arousing emotional exaltation. It is one of the virtues of the great Indian science of aesthetics that it has recognised artistic exaltation, the heightened condition of aesthetic awareness, as a legitimate road to the supreme religious goal. The great poet and Krishna-worshipper Chaitanya developed the technique of the religious kirtan, where the worshippers meet in large groups, and, singing Krishna songs, work themselves into a state of ecstasy. This is, of course, a special type of music with an obviously religious intent. But normal Indian music has a special connection with these Rajput miniatures, and with the cult of Krishna to which they are so intimately related (plate p. 129). To understand this, something must be said about the basis of Indian music.

Modern Western tonal music is based on three forms of scale, the major, and the melodic and harmonic minor scales. This limited group of scale forms has become fixed in pattern owing to the Western development of chords, chordal progressions and the concept of key. Older, mediaeval Western music was often based on the "modes" of classical antiquity, which can roughly be described as sequences employing the same seven notes of our familiar major scale, in the same order, but starting each on a different degree, and so displaying a different pattern of relationship between the fundamental note and all the others. Each one of these modes was held to have a special realm of feeling of its own. Still earlier, in plainsong and in many folk-melodies, the basis was pentatonic; again the fundamental note of the series used could be any one of the five.

Indian music since the late middle-ages, being purely melodic and intrinsically monodic, has employed all these Western scale forms, both ancient and modern, as well as many others besides. Some, for example, incorporate a full third between some steps in the series, and quarter tones between others, and most have different patterns in ascent and descent. Each has its special emotional flavour, and is used at appropriate seasons and times of day, with appropriate words if the music is to be sung These scales or modes are called "ragas".

Love, laughter, compassion, heroism, anger, fear, disgust, wonder and peace are the nine moods of dramatic art. Similar emotional qualities are given to each of the ragas by the emphasis placed on certain of its notes. "For laughter and love the fourth and fifth are used; in the heroic mood, in anger and wonder, the tonic fifth and second. For compassion the minor seventh and minor third; in disgust and fear the sixth; in peace the fourth". Even the qualities of individual notes of the scale are sometimes indicated. "The tonic is bright like lotus petals, the second tawny or like a parrot. The minor third is golden and the fourth like jasmine. The fifth is Krishna—the dark one—and attracts; the sixth is yellow and the minor seventh is many-hued".

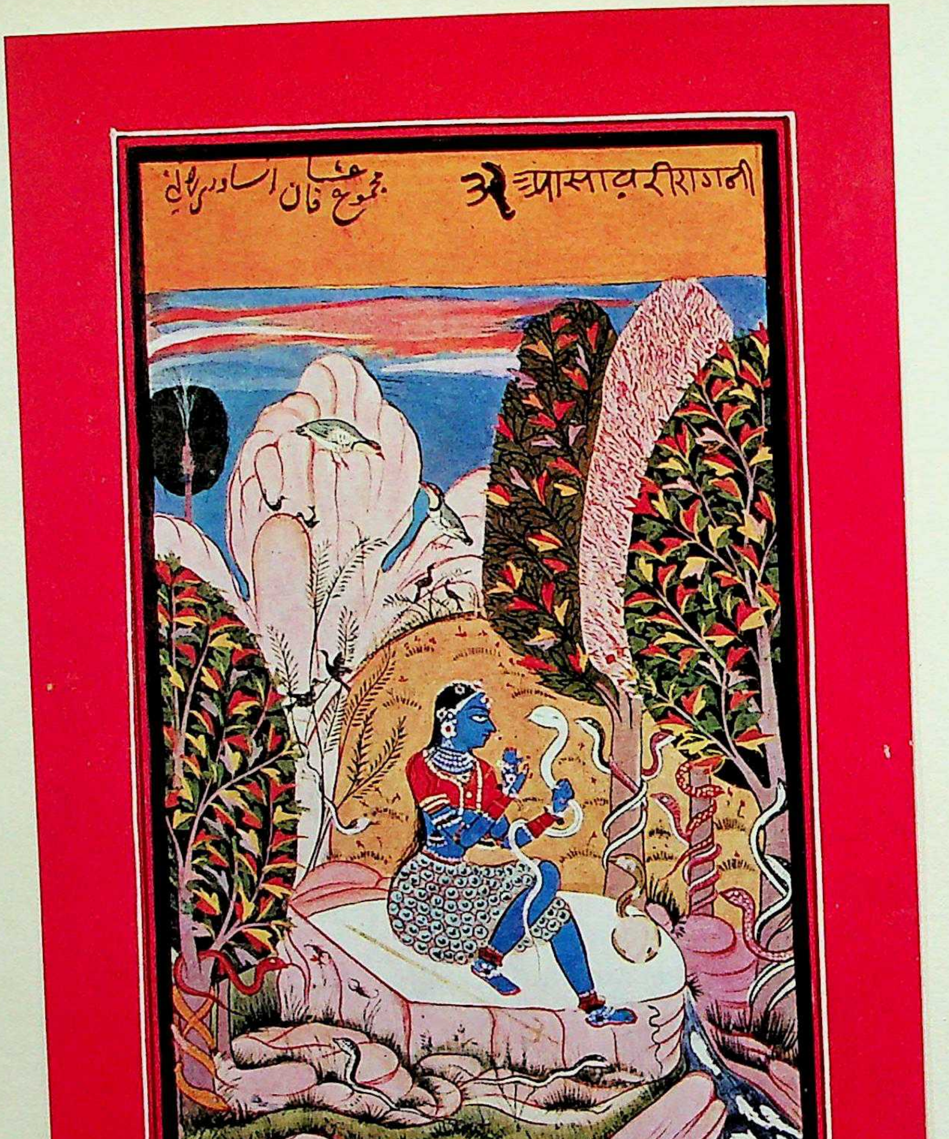
The scales are amplified, and their special qualities enhanced by the use of various patterns of chromatic passing-notes at given places in the scale as the musical line moves upwards or downwards. Since much of the best Indian music is played extempore, and composer and executant are the same person, the scale supplies the fundamental material for the musical structure, and the musician's task is to


॥दक्षण गुर्जरी रागिणी॥श्यामा सुकेशि मलयद्रुमाणां स्थिता लसत्पल्लवपुष्पजा
॥ते शृण्वती स्वराणां रधती विचनागं तंत्री सुखा दक्षिण गुर्जरीयं॥२६॥ ॥

THE DAKSINA GURJARA RAGINI — MEWAR — CA. 1650
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF INDIA, NEW DELHI

bring out and display as many of its inherent possibilities as he can. (Rhythm, into which we cannot go here, supplies the basis in terms of time). Therefore the ragas, each and every one of them, have been the subject of a great deal of profound meditation, musical and theoretical, and their special characters have become clearly understood.

Following the deep-rooted Indian habit of personalising its abstract concepts, and of systematising knowledge, the ragas have been identified with men and



THE ASCETIC GIRL WHO IS THE MUSICAL MODE ASAVARI RAGINI — BUNDI — CA. 1675
GOPI KRISHNA KANORIA COLLECTION, CALCUTTA

women of appropriate types, and grouped together. The seven-eight- or nine note ragas have been grouped, according to their basic pattern, under the leadership of one or other of the five note ragas. These latter, the pentatonic ragas are called the male ragas and the others are called female ragas, the "raginis". During the mediaeval centuries a number of poets composed series of poems, called "Ragamalas" i.e. "Raga-garlands", describing situations that aptly present the characteristic flavours of the different ragas and raginis. These poems are deeply influenced by the eroticism of the Krishna cult, and often represent legends associated with Krishna. Very, very many of the Rajput miniatures illustrate particular examples of these ragas and raginis, with the related poem written either on the front or back of the picture. These miniatures were usually executed in sets, and were immensely popular.

One of the springtime ragini poems, for example, declares, "My heart dreams of the firm breasted Hindola with broad hips, who wears bright coloured clothes; with the flower of the lotus she worships lord Krishna who sits on a swing hung among the twisted roots of a banyan tree. She hears the notes of his flute, her heart full of love, her beautiful limbs adorned with jewels". The sad Ragini of the rainy season is "pale and weak, her voice like the Kokil singing; some cadence of the song reminds her of her lord". Clasping her vina, Mallavika" cries out in misery, anguished at heart with the pain of youth". Asavari, "with shining dark skin, adorned with peacock feathers and a necklace of rare, splendid pearls, on the mountain top drags forth the snake from the sandal trees and wears it as a girdle" (plate p. 130). The Bangal Ragini "Tortured by separation takes on the aspect of an ascetic. She fills her jar with Ganges water, and wears clothes of birchbark". But Lalita the happy mistress "resplendently beautiful lies exhausted with love on her bed at dawn". The lordly Sri Raga "sits in a beautiful mansion while a girl waves a fly whisk over him. Contemplating the Raga's splendour the bridegroom gains perfect concentration of mind."

There is yet another way in which emotionalism combined with the clear systematic thinking of Indian music have had their influence on post-mediaeval painting. This is in the use of specific colours and specific colour combinations to create specific emotional atmospheres. A glance through the miniatures in this book will show this at once. But unfortunately no written theory on the topic is available to us. It most likely that the method was a product of the fertile seventeenth century when both music and art underwent a splendid transformation.

This, then, will give some idea of the extent and impact of the worship of Krishna on Indian art. In earlier painting, even the vivid images of Tanjore, a current and undifferentiated idiom was used for all sorts of art. At Ajanta, no systematic distinctions of line-character and colour combination were used. The texture of the whole panorama is even, in colour and linear expression. Perhaps it would not be inappropriate to assume that such an art went with a purely pentatonic musical scale, and a musical method not too remote from European mediaeval music. Then, along with the immense wave of emotion dedicated to Krishna, a new and more highly developed system of emotional expression in art evolved. It seems from the historical synchronism of this evolution with the development of Islamic court art that there may very well be some causal factor to be found in the importation of Persian ideas. Although one cannot of course speak for the music itself, as it was never written down, it is known that some types of musical instrument eg. the sitar, were imported from Persia at this time. The use made of these new elements however, was uniquely Indian. Krishna and his cult of passionate devotion belonged nowhere but on Indian soil.

XVIth century

The beginnings of Rajput painting can be only hesitantly traced, and a few threads gathered together. During the 16th century we know of work done in one or two places that can be said to presage the true Rajput style of Central India. The Nimatnamah from the Moslem state of Malwa was not without descendants. To the east of Rajasthan in Oudh and Jaunpur, a version of the Western Indian manuscript style was used in illustrating romantic literature. The eastern version has a less taut and calligraphic line, elongated rather than squat figures, but the palette is the same and the convention of the further eye protruding beyond the profile is preserved. The Moslem state of Malwa in Central India was ruled (1512-31), by Mahmud II who, despite his own faith, showed the greatest favour to Hindus and Hindu culture. He systematically persecuted and even wantonly executed his Moslem nobles, installing Hindus in their place. We can certainly assume that painting in Malwa survived the death of this ruler at the hands of his angry Muslim neighbours. For in mid-century under Pathan rulers work was being produced there devoted to Hindu themes in a most interesting style, which owes nothing to the Western Indian style. Clear yellow and blue are combined with a dense red and green. The hard outlines which are often executed in body colour, as well as in black, are reserved almost exclusively for the human figures. These figures are rendered only in profile, without modelling; the huge conceptually frontal eyes, are given thick outlines of black; and there is a jutting triangular fan of pleats at the front of the women's skirts which is obviously a feature of contemporary chic, also found in the paintings from Oudh. This Malwa style reached its apogee in a well known series of illustrations to the Chaurapanchashika made about 1570. It can easily be seen to be completely distinct from the Western Indian Jain style, representing a radically different method of visual thinking. Not only are such obvious features as the false three-quarter face with its protruding further eye missing in the Central Indian style, but the use of the lines in the design in the two styles is totally dissimilar. In Western Indian painting it is the continuity of the swerving contour over the whole reach of face or figure that is sought : in the other style the lines are used to fix onto the surface enclosures that are distinct units, and have a definite shape. All the profile figures are rendered without modelling and the enclosures mentioned are drawn each very precisely. The nose and upper lip jut from the scarcely inflected square of the head; the rhomboid of the chest and the emotive curved shape of the well-filled skirt are clearly demarcated. But perhaps the most surprising effect is the way in which the female breasts are rendered by a pair of circles so distinct as almost to detach them from the body.

A fair number of paintings in this most beautiful style are known of largish format, on paper. They show the compartmentation of design that is so charcateristic of early 17th century Mewar and Malwa painting; and it is clear that paintings like those of the Chaurapanchashika must have supplied the basis for those style. The compartmentation, as it appears in the larger miniatures, really represents an obvious solution to the problem of filling a larger format that would occur to artists familiar with the narrower scope of palm-leaf manuscript pages. And indeed, at least one palm leaf manuscript is known, of the later sixteenth century, in a style very similar to that of the Chaurapanchashika paintings. It obviously belongs to the same generic class of illuminated work as the Western Indian Jain manuscripts, but the actual style of its execution relates it firmly to the Chaurapanchashika style suggesting roots for this latter extending back deep into the Hindu past.

To this style is related the slightly later style of Mandu, also to the east of Rajasthan; these two share a true line of descent of their own. They are related by their clear sense of volume contained in the purely linear drawing of arms and shoulders, the square plan of the form of the heads, the long backward curve, almost a curlicue, of the hairline of the figures, the large proportions of the head. The still later, but related style of Jaunpur shows a remarkable affinity with the manuscript style of 17th century Orissa, which in turn has a close affinity with the local sculpture of the great temple of Konarak, carved in the 13th century. In the art of Jaunpur there are echoes of the Muslim art that had already entered India, especially in the patterning of surfaces. These are strikingly absent in the miniatures of Malwa and Mandu ca. 1570. But all three styles retain the conceptual juxtaposition of objects that is characteristic of the mediaeval Indian conception of pictorial space.

The late 16th century art from Jaunpur shows a development away from the simplicity of this mediaeval conception of space. The figures here are sometimes arranged in overlapping ranks and fairly complex groups. These groups, or even single figures, are set into backgrounds filled with trees and flowering shrubs which are *not* outlined, but drawn—and very impressively drawn—freely in colour, a stroke to each leaf or petal, a long sinuous stroke of the full brush for the stem of a creeper. The luxuriance of the foliage ornament provokes a sense of continuous if two-dimensional pictorial space. And this sense there can be little doubt must be due to the example of miniature paintings like those made in Ahmadnagar, about 1570, under the joint influence of Persian painting and the art of Vijaynagar.

XVIIth century

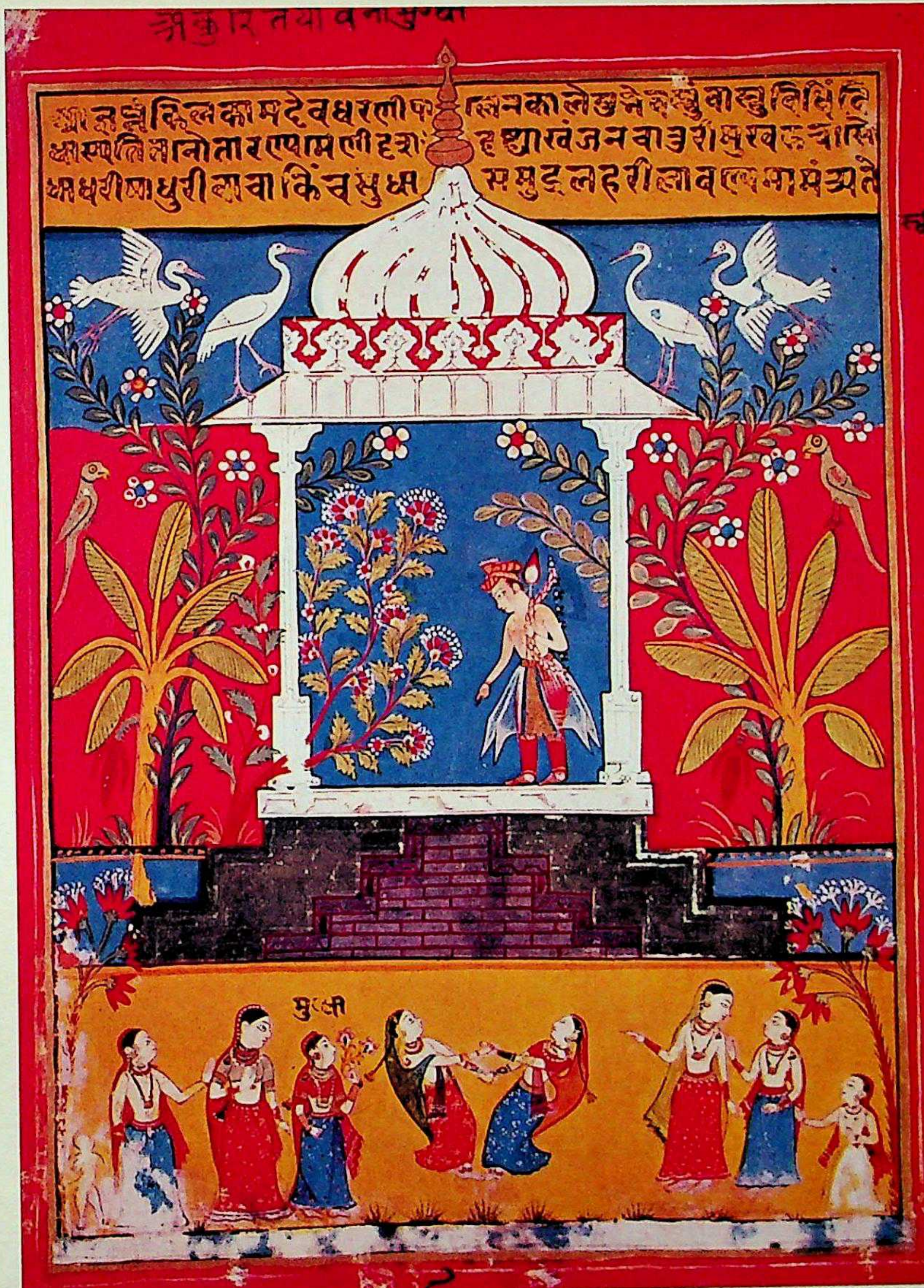
At the beginning of the seventeenth century the whole of the north of India lay under Moghul domination, and during the course of that century the artistic ideals of the Moghul court were to exercise a profound influence on the art of the

Rajput courts. However, the basis of the great Rajput traditions had been already laid down, and in the first quarter of the 17th century in two states especially, seminal painting styles were established which represented a continuation of true native traditions, and formed the solid basis for most of the developments of the Rajput miniature. These two states, Malwa and Mewar, were significantly both in wild and forbidding terrain relatively distant from the capital, and their rulers had a reputation for political intransigeance.

The art of miniature had, of course, been established longer in Malwa. But there is little to suggest the survival of the Nimatnamah tradition. By about 1630 however, a style was established which, though recognisably distinct, had a great deal in common with that of Mewar. Its lack of certain particular qualities can be ascribed to the fact that Mewar benefited by the employment at Chawand—the state's first capital—of a painter from Jaunpur. Some of his most impressive work, dated 1605, is known. The particular stylistic feature which characterises so much of later Mewar painting done in the cities of Udaipur and Chitorgarh, its use of un-outlined foliage painted in direct strokes of colour, can probably be ascribed to the example of this artist.

However, the development of both these schools, that of Malwa and that of Mewar, from the relatively schematic styles of the 16th century towards their great achievements of ca. 1640 must have been due to some other fertilising influence. It is impossible that this should have been Moghul painting; for the interests of Moghul court art under Jehangir and Shah Jehan have practically nothing in common with those of Rajput art. It is much more probable that the fertilising influence arrived from the Deccan where between 1570 and 1590 sets of Raga pictures had been made following patterns which were imitated almost exactly in Mewar and Malwa. There is a great deal of similarity, allowing for the interposition of Jaunpur elements, between the feminine figure types of Ahmadnagar and those of Mewar. And finally one of the most characteristic technical methods used in Mewar to render trees is found in the earlier Raga sets of Ahmadnagar. This is the method already noted in the 14th century paintings at Tiruparutikundram involving the laying down of an area of dark colour—usually green or brown—as a ground for the mass of the tree's foliage. On top of this, the leaves and flowers are stroke-painted in solid, lighter body colour.

So much for the probable historical development of this style. There is nothing in dynastic or political history to "account for" it. Our chief interest will always be in the profound and farouche expression of the work of its great artists, some of whose names we know from inscriptions the paintings bear. The most immediately striking characteristic of all the Rajput paintings is the intensity of their colour. In fact, intense colour is not a natural attribute of the Indian scene. The blazing sun bleaches the landscape, and the glimmering dust haze nullifies contrasts. But Indians themselves love strong colours. For many centuries they were the world's most skilful weavers and dyers of rainbow-hued fabrics. The ruins of the early wall paintings at Ajanta show a great variety of coloured garments. But the colours actually used to make the wall-paintings have not the intense brilliance of those



KAMA, THE GOD OF LOVE, WATCHING GIRLS PLAYING — UDAIPUR — CA. 1630
GOPI KRISHNA KANORIA COLLECTION, CALCUTTA

used in the Rajput miniatures. The former are mainly earth pigments, which are permanent, and have been able to resist exposure. Most of the more brilliant, clear colours, the reds, yellows and greens, that Indian artists could use are far less permanent. If they had been used on the walls of Ajanta they would have now vanished. But in manuscripts, and on the album paintings of the Post-Moslem epoch in India, where they were preserved shut away from the light and atmosphere, these colours have survived almost undimmed. We can be sure, too, that the science of the preparation of colours advanced much during the 17th century under the influence of Persian industrial skills imported by the Moghuls.

In Western painting, especially in the work of many esteemed painters of the modern school of Paris, colours are rarely left their full intensity. They are "killed". A red will be slightly reduced in status toward purplish brown or tainted with green, in order to "harmonise" it with its neighbour tones. In fact much of the colour technique of Poliakoff or de Stael, for example, consists in the assembling and mutual reconciliation by "killing" of initially "incompatible" tints. The early Rajput painters did exactly the opposite. To them a pure clear colour in all its brilliance was beautiful in its own right. Its manufacture alone was a work of great care and skill. So why spoil it ? In these album paintings westerners are apt at first to be shocked by encountering staring red, orange, blue and acid yellow set side by side, unmitigated. The skill of the Rajput painter was not bent to "cookery" of the Western type, but to balancing the colour *quantities* in his picture. The pure physiological excitement produced by intense colour was one of the most potent weapons in his armoury of expression. His pictures therefore stimulate and combine the various kinds of excitement produced by different colours to produce an intended total effect. The progressive refinements of colour that were added to the palette of Rajput painters during the later part of the 17th and the 18th century never infringed the autonomy of the individual colour, though they may have led to a greater delicacy of expression.

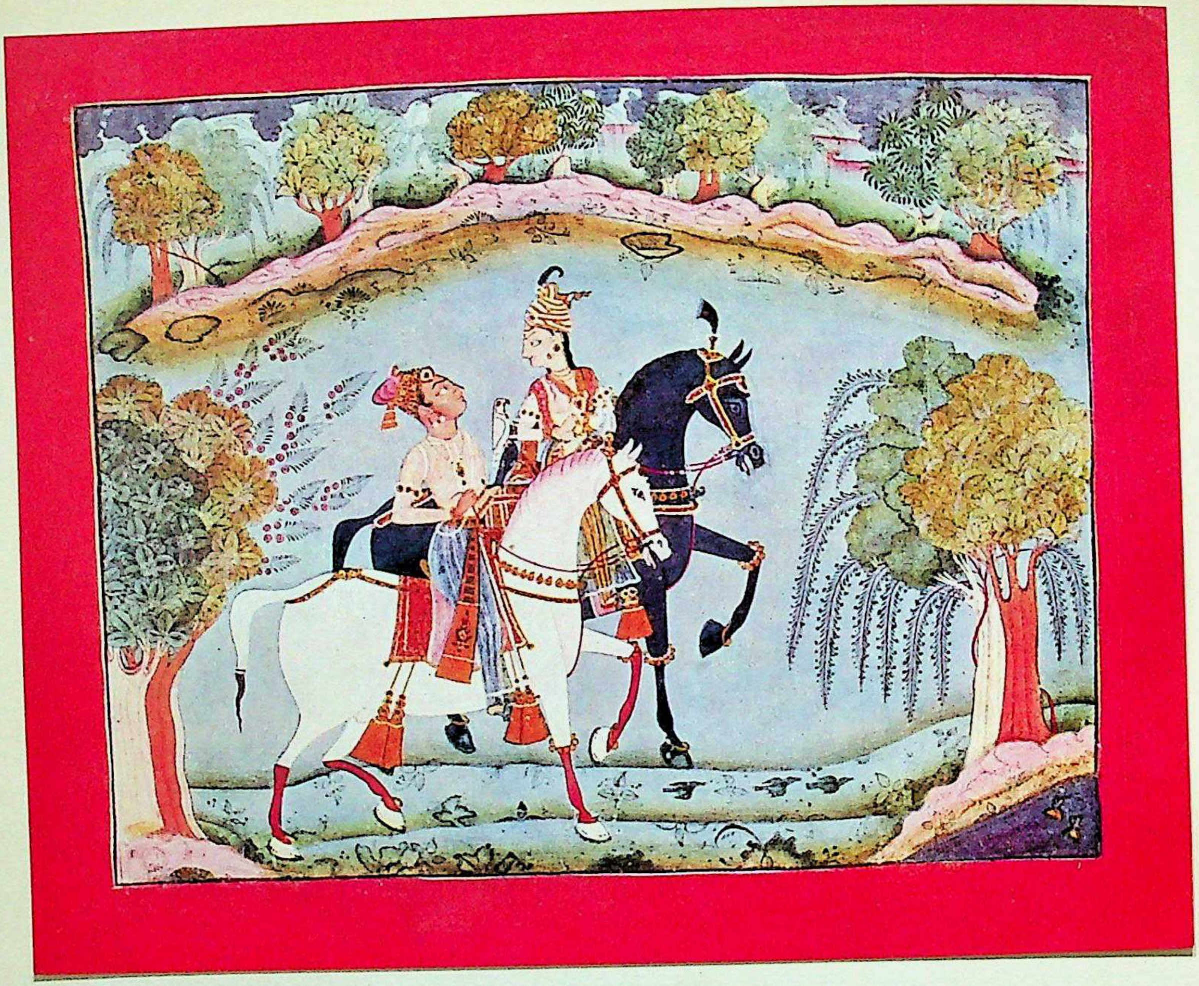
A striking characteristic of the earlier pictures from Mewar and Malwa is their use of compartmented composition in space (plate p. 135). Occasionally the whole picture is occupied by a single figure, say of a girl wandering alone in a flowering landscape; or by a group composed of blue-skinned Krishna on a swing attended by his Gopis; or by a couple of lovers riding on a camel. But very often indeed the early Mewar and Malwa painters divided their picture space into bands and rectangles of most subtle proportions, and used all or some of these as frames for figures and groups. A little pile of turrets, roofs and pavilions at one side will frame a seated girl; a doorway will frame her maid. Beneath will run a band of water with lotus flowers and the Brahminy ducks that symbolise frustrated longing. On the other side landscape and sky will be represented by broad bands, settings for trees, clouds and flying birds. The whole picture may be framed in one or more bands of red, yellow or orange, which serve as a kind of musical drone on the fundamental note of the "colour raga".

The figures of early Rajput paintings are avowedly schematic. Later in the 17th century and during the 18th portraiture comes in, from the example of Moghul art. Artists trained at the Moghul court were often employed by Rajput rulers. But during most of the 17th century the traditional Indian interest in the supra-personal, the type, rather than the individual, holds sway. The later history of painting at the Rajput courts is largely determined by "waves of influence" from Delhi. At the end of the 17th century, when the puritan tyrant Aurangzeb was busy trying to destroy India, and art as well, many painters from the capital must have been driven to seek their livelihood in "the provinces"; and Rajput painting benefited thereby.

Only in the last few years has it become possible to understand something of the process of development of the later schools of Rajput painting and their interrelationship. There is a very great deal we still do not know. The most promising future line of investigation would be the exploration of the Rajput palaces for their wall paintings, and their publication. At present we must be content with a survey of the miniature schools. We know that from Malwa and Mewar, where painting in a recognisably idiosyncratic but enfeebled manner survived into the 19th century, two main streams of pictorial tradition fertilised two regions of Rajput India. The first was in southern Rajasthan, mainly comprising the states of Bundi, Jodhpur, Jaipur, Kishangarh. The second was in the Panjab hills to the north, chiefly comprising the states of Basohli, Jammu, Chamba, Kulu, Guler, Kangra, Garhwal and Nurpur. The history of painting in all these states falls between 1650 and 1820, and we will consider the two groups in turn.

SOUTHERN RAJASTHAN (XVIIth-XIXth C.)

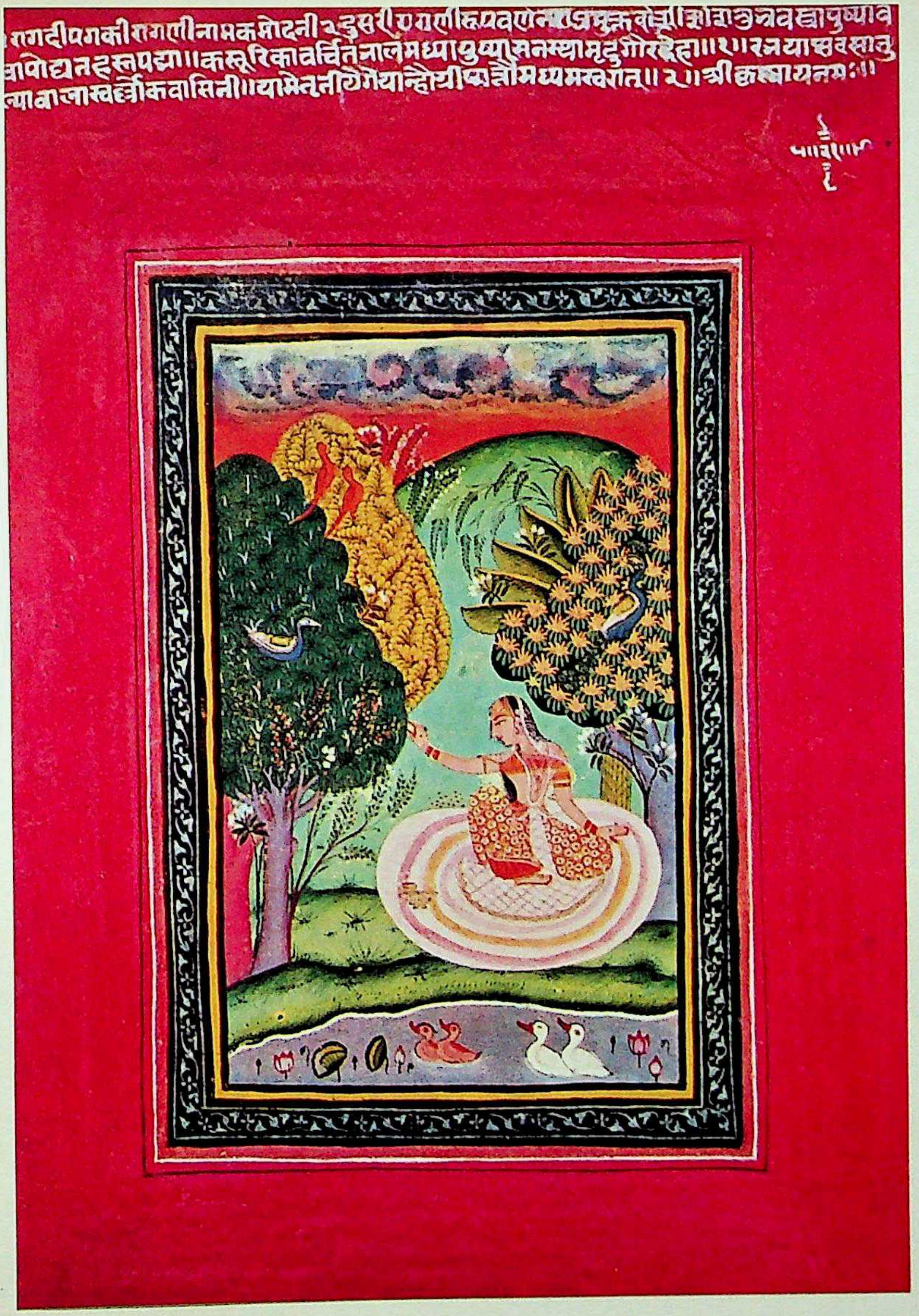
Miniature painting in Bundi in the second quarter of the 17th century is at first in a style directly derived from that at Mewar (Udaipur). Between 1635 and 1650, however, under Rao Chattar Sal, who served at the court of Shah Jehan, were made pictures in the current Moghul idiom, by a Moghul-trained artist, of Chattar Sal at court or engaged in some stately occupation. Under the next rulers, however Bhas Singh (1659-82), and Anirudh Singh (d. 1702) we see the emergence of the true Bundi style, a kind of mixture of the farouche and vivid style of Mewar with a refinement derived most likely from the example of Moghul work. In these pictures the layout and vivid colour, the great variety of creepers and flowering trees, and the female figures, come from native Indian tradition; the portrait quality of the masculine figures and the polish of the surface from Moghul exemplars. Krishna legends, Ragas and Raginis, a multitude of scenes in great spreads of flowering landscape, executed in a wide variety of colours all display a finesse of hair-line drawing that is characteristic of the Bundi style (plate p. 139). As the eighteenth century progresses some of the Bundi artists display a most astonishing gift for linear invention, that reveals itself in the elaborate white whorls of wavelets on the lotus ponds, and in the almost Akbar-like drawing of elephants in vigorous action, rolling and running. Gold is used a great deal, and rows of raised white dots represent



BAZ BAHADUR AND RUPMATI HAWKING ON HORSEBACK — BUNDI — CA. 1800 — ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM, OXFORD

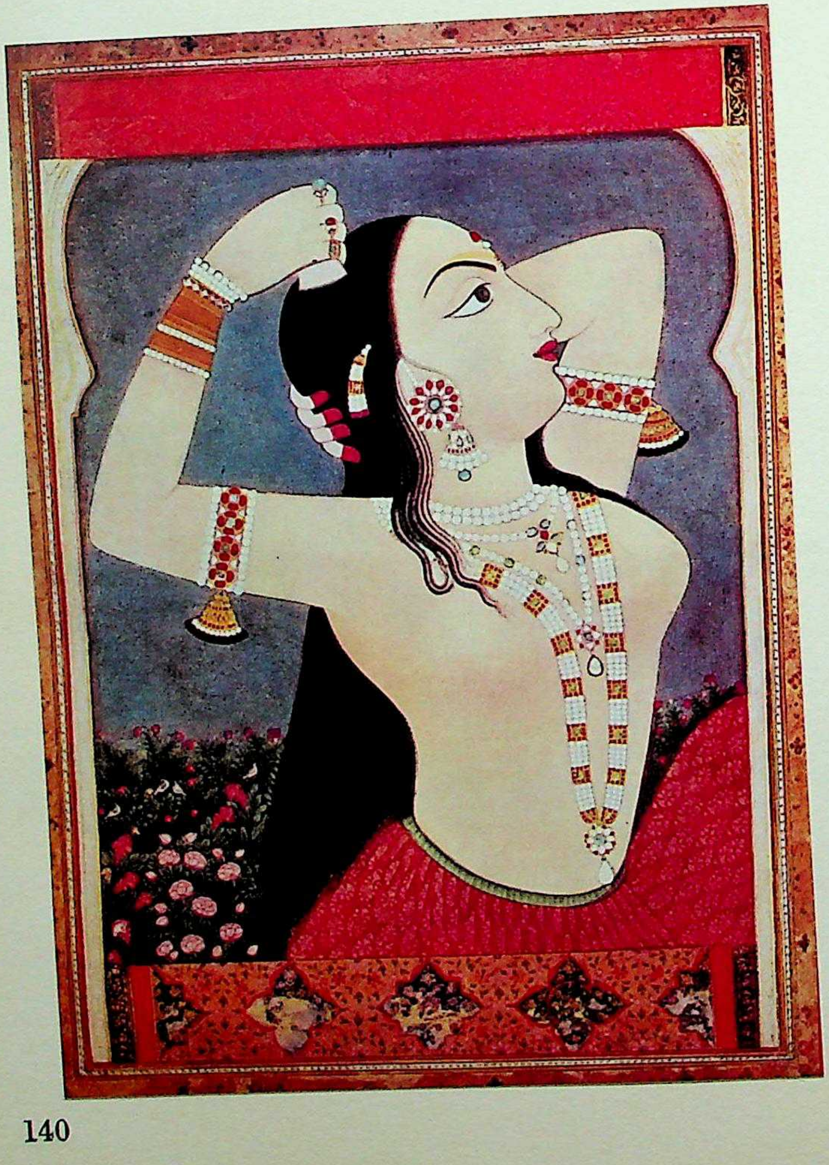
strings of pearls, a recrudescence of far older Indian tradition. By the end of the 18th century the Bundi style had in general become enfeebled and over-refined with many direct reminiscences of Delhi motives, especially in the scenes of elegant palace life. But here and there, even as late as 1810, a good artist has managed to infuse vigour and life into traditional material—fantastic landscapes where dramas from Hindu legend are unfolded, or hunting scenes (plate p. 138).

The painting of Kotah at the end of the seventeenth century was directly derived from that of neighbouring Bundi. Early in the eighteenth century the rule of Kotah expelled the king of Bundi and seized his most precious royal heirlooms.



A GIRL WAITING FOR HER LOVER — BUNDI — CA. 1760 — ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM, OXFORD

Afterwards the most stringent precautions were taken in Kotah to outwit the stratagems by which Bundi sought to get them back. This constant state of emergency may have had something to do with the apparent hiatus in the evolution of miniature painting in Kotah. By the 1770s, however, under Umed Singh, a most fascinating and vigorous style emerged. Most of these pictures deal with animals and hunting. Their wide Henri Rousseau-like landscapes are dense with leafy thickets from which portrait heads of the Rajah and his courtiers peer, lying in wait for the tigers that seize the tethered buffalo. Often along the horizon runs the escarpment



ALBUM PAINTING OF A GIRL
- JAIPUR -
LATE XVIIIth CENT.
VICTORIA AND ALBERT
MUSEUM, LONDON

of broken rocks that is one of the natural features of Kotah state, and the moon hangs low in the cloudless evening sky. The tradition of vivid animal drawing then begun persists right down into the late 19th century, with a vitality most unusual in India under the British Raj.

The painting of Jodhpur and Jaipur is very much a matter of skilful and polished reproduction of standard types of subject fixed by earlier tradition, to a greater extent than is usual even in Indian art. In Jodhpur ca. 1750 under Rajah Ram Singh was developed a highly stylised type of equestrian profile portrait of the ruler in procession, brilliantly coloured, set usually against a pale copper-green ground. The massive curvilinear diagram of the stallion is a perfect emblem for the vainglory of the stout ruler, with his mutton-chop whiskers, who rides him. The small attendant figures on foot, who carry the Rajah's fly-whisk and sword, are there to emphasise by their rather sinister insignifiance the ruler's own inflated conception of his status and person. These pictures are exact parallels of the verbal panegyric. The Rajah wished not only to hear his praises sung, but to see himself enshrined in colour and form, elevated thus into the heavenly regions of the visual imagination. The art of Jaipur contains similar motives, but is on the whole more varied, more purely hedonistic. Creations like the white-bodied girl illustrated here (plate p. 140), and courtly scenes in white marble palaces are the rule. Some of these display the greatest elaboration, and are very large, with a lot of gold employed.

It was in the state of Kishangarh that in the middle of the 18th century were produced some of the world's most beautiful paintings. They represent the ultimate perfection of the combined Rajasthani-Delhi style, and their inspired elegance was the product of a unique moment, a conspiracy of history, as it were. The Vaishnava ruler of Kishangarh, Savant Singh, himself a considerable poet writing under the name of Nagari Das, fell deeply in love with a singing girl in his step-mother's zenana called Bani Thani, idealising her in his poems as Radha. She too was a poet of no mean stature. The Rajah was served by an artist of the most profound genius, Nihal Chand, whose paintings epitomise the cult of devotional eroticism to which all three were dedicated.

During the seventeenth century, painting had existed in Kishangarh, a competent amalgam of Moghul and Rajput. In the earlier part of the 18th century good court pictures with elongated figures and broad landscape vistas in the manner of the early Aurangzeb era, were painted. In the 1730s Nihal Chand began to develop his full powers. Some of his works are the usual album-leaf size: but others—the best— are larger. So that, whilst the figures remain on the usual miniature scale there is room for an expansive development of landscape with great reaches of sky. Even at their furthest stretch of refinement these pictures still retain the clearly compartmented and banded layout characteristic of the earliest Rajput art.

The human figures are intensely idealised. The princely image of Krishna is handsome and slender. But the girls, especially Radha herself, are rendered with most delicately inflected musical contours. Their faces, with their pointed noses and long deeply curved eyes are probably conceived after the features of Bani Thani herself. Some bust-length portraits of Radha are especially beautiful. In the picture reproduced here (plate p. 143) there is not the intense, brilliant colour that Nihal Chand often used. The key is restrained and delicate. But the incredibly refined drawing and musical expressiveness of the lines shows one aspect of Nihal Chand's work at its best.

It would not be possible to reproduce one of Nihal Chand's big landscapes in a book of this size. Krishna and the cow-girls move in patterned gardens, sit on white marble terraces or glide in little vermilion boats on the holy river beside dense bands of forest trees filled with brilliantly coloured birds. Beyond are visitas of green hills and white pavilions. Above them the sunset sky is banded with vermilion and gold, and filled with small crimson cockles of cloud. In costumes and trees are tones of lilac and grey and a multitude of greens. This is the eternal springtime landscape where the love affair between God and the human soul is set, the enchanted region of Brindaban of which Nagari Das himself wrote:

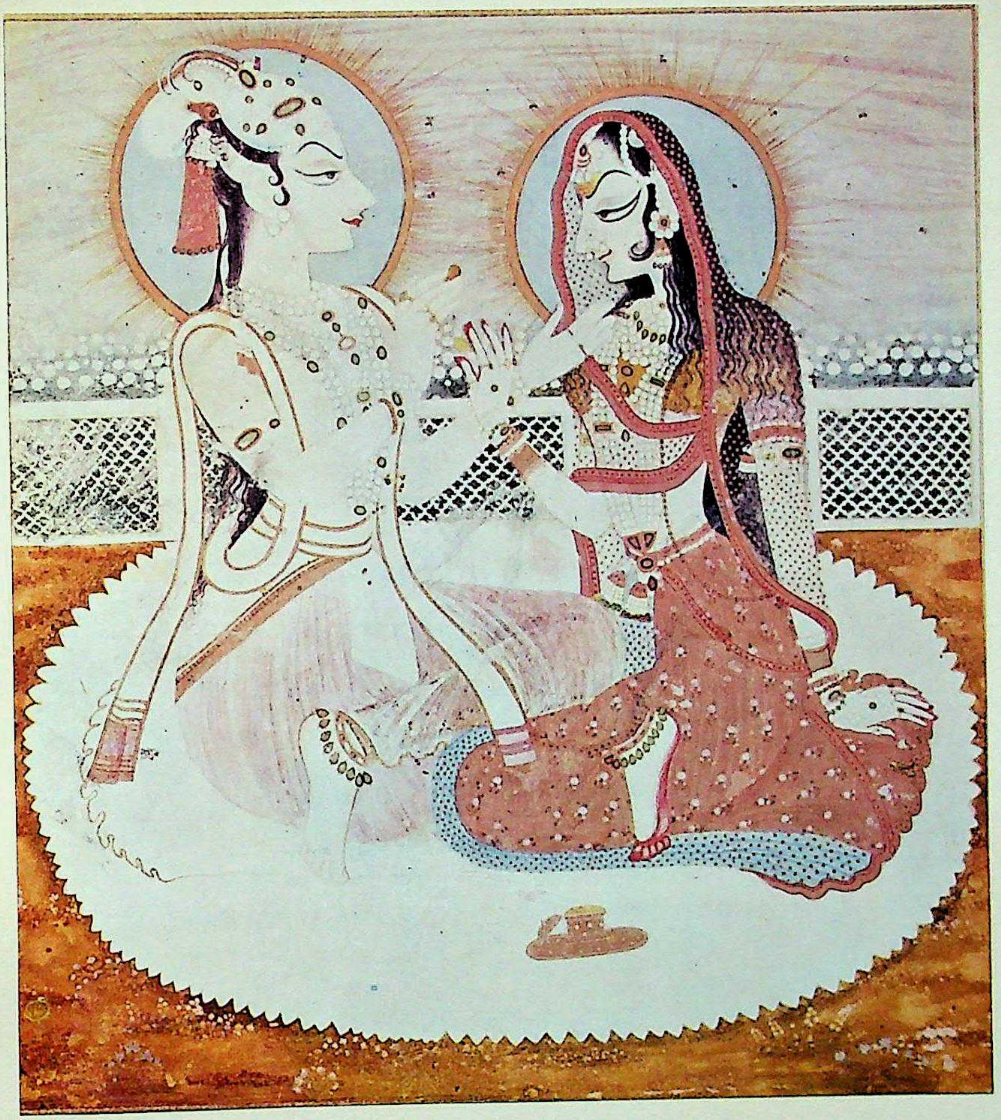
"Seeing the idiot world around me, I long for Brindaban
and the Yamuna's sweet waters;
But life is slipping by. How deeply I yearn for Brindaban; how
afraid am I that life is slipping by!"

Nihal Chand had capable followers at Kishangarh, who produced beautiful and far from insignificant work. But their trees and groves, their courtly figures in palace gardens lack the extraordinary sense of life with which Nihal Chand was able to infuse his forms.

PANJAB HILLS (XVIIth-XIXth C.)

The second region where the development of Rajput painting took place was the Panjab hills. Again, it was the art of Udaipur in Mewar that provided a major impulse for the germinal style of the hills, in the influential and wealthy state of Basohli. Rajahs of Basohli had served the Moghul emperors at court. One of them Sangram Pal (1634-1673) for his extreme beauty, became a royal favourite, and was even taken into the royal zenana to be inspected by the ladies. We do not know, however, of any painting from Basohli which is of direct Moghul inspiration. It was under Kirpal Pal (ruled 1678-1693) that the great school of Basohli painting began to flourish, probably under the direct inspiration of artists from Mewar. There were some portraits, but the bulk of its work was inspired by Krishna themes.

The pictures produced here during the later part of the 17th century are unmistakable (plate p. 145). The figures are drawn with primitive directness and often with a striking sense of violent movment. There is no search for linear perfection. The heads are treated as great, expressive profiles rounded off behind, and dominated by a large and vivid frontally conceptual eye. The composition is



RAJAH SAVANT SINGH GIVING BETEL TO A POETESS — KISHANGARH — CA. 1780
GOPI KRISHNA KANORIA COLLECTION, CALCUTTA

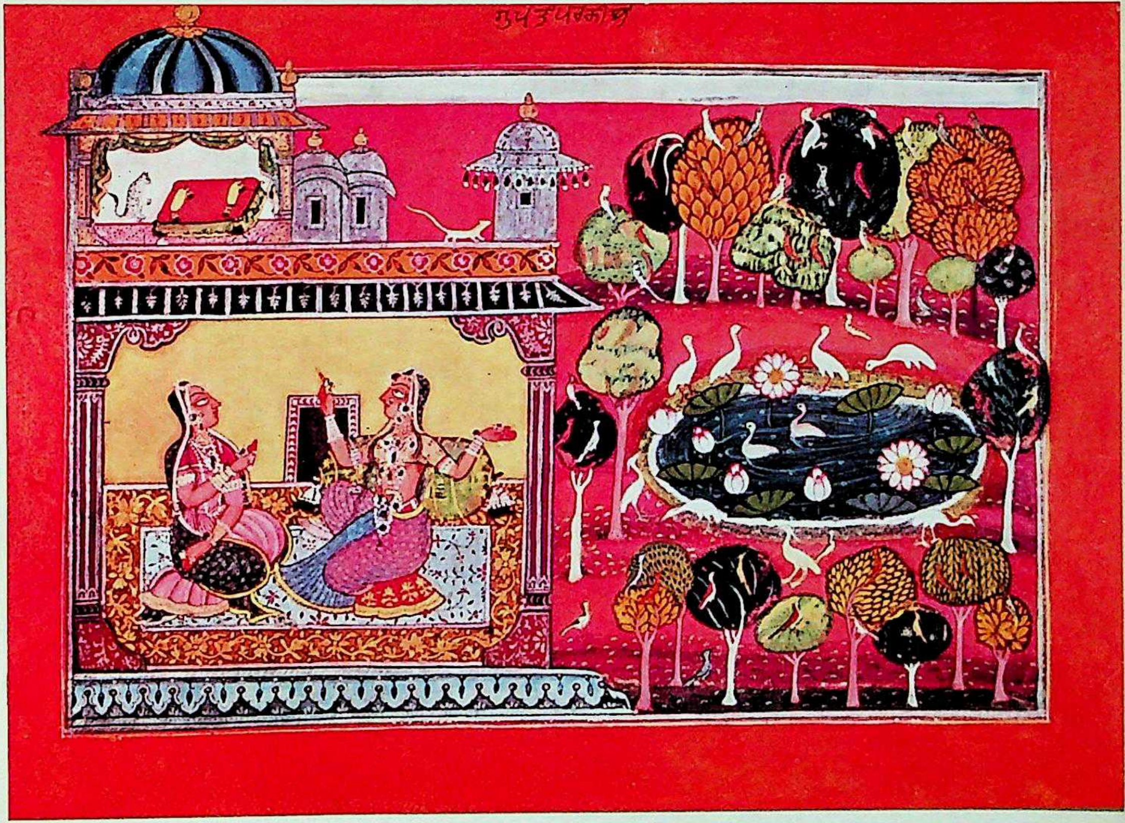
additive. Clear and simple cut-out shapes are assembled to fill the picture space in a balanced way. Landscapes or horizons are treated as frames for the foreground figures. Their magnificent colour gives these miniatures their ultimate farouche and intense expression. To the usual Mewar palette is added a range of lime greens, acid yellows, oranges, pinks, blues and purple-browns. An impression of vivid presence is given to the figures by two devices. The first is the use of a rim of darker tone painted into the background around the silhouettes of the figures. (This technique was used occasionally in the Western Indian manuscripts) the second is the lavish use, to represent jewellery, of blobs of white that stand high above the surface of the rest of the painting. Much use is made of gold.

Later rulers continued to maintain an atelier of artists. As the eighteenth century wore on influences from Delhi art made their way to Basohli, and the painters developed a more refined type of expression, with more sophisticated line-leading, more "optically correct" proportions among the figures in their relations to the landscape. At the same time they lost something of their earlier vigour. It was this later version of the Basohli style that provided the basis for miniature art in some of the other hill-states.

Jammu, a near neighbour of Basohli, was a large and powerful kingdom. During the 19th century its energetic rulers made themselves masters of the territory between the rivers Ravi and Chenab, and dominated, amongst other states, Basohli. The miniature art of Jammu has about it little romance. The late Basohli idiom was bent towards satisfying the vanity of the powerful rulers of a modest empire Most of the Jammu pictures are portraits of the Rajahs, their courtiers and families.

With the death of the fanatical Sunni, Aurangzeb, in 1707 the Moghul power had collapsed utterly. The emperor's last years had seen the emergence of new and militant Hindu forces ranged against him. Shivaji, the lion of the Marathas, had broken his grip on the south; and in the north, in the Panjab, alongside that of the Rajputs had been waxing the power and influence of the Sikhs.

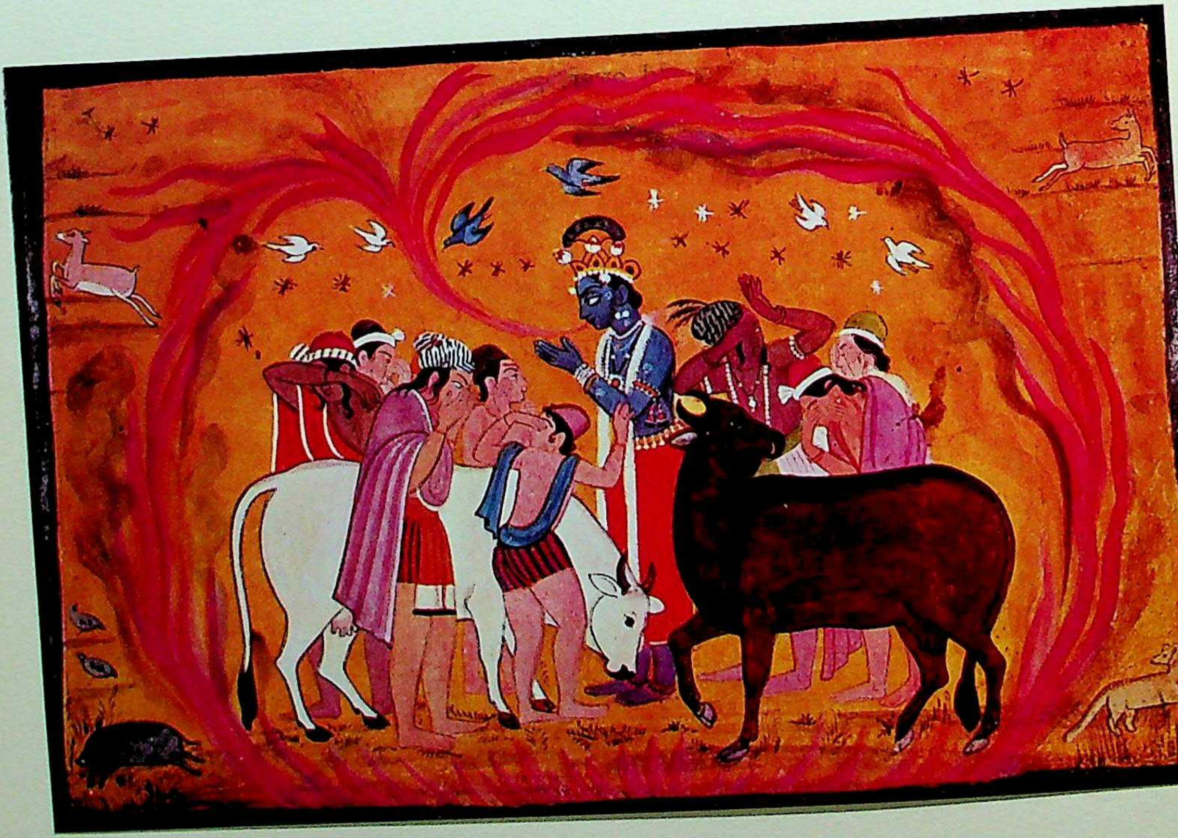
This fascinating people, the Sikhs, were led during the 17th century by a line of Gurus (teachers) who in the face of the greatest adversity had welded their converts virtually into a nation. Its members had a profound sense of individual responibility and communal cohesion. Their outward signs are familiar; the untrimmed hair and beard, the iron bracelet, drawers, quoit, and knife. Their cultural heritage, enshrined in their bible, the "Adi-Granth", is a compendium of the best of Indian mediaeval tradition. Hymns of the Krishna devotee Jayadeva, of the weaver-poet Kabir, and two Moslem saints, find a place in it. In Sikh towns and cities of the Panjab, painting, as well as other arts, was practised during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this book is reproduced a superb example of Sikh portrature (plate p. 147), in a style related to that of Jammu. Its vivid sense of run of personality, its harsh but dedicated drawing, lift it to a plane far above the usual derivative portraits from Delhi or the Deccan.

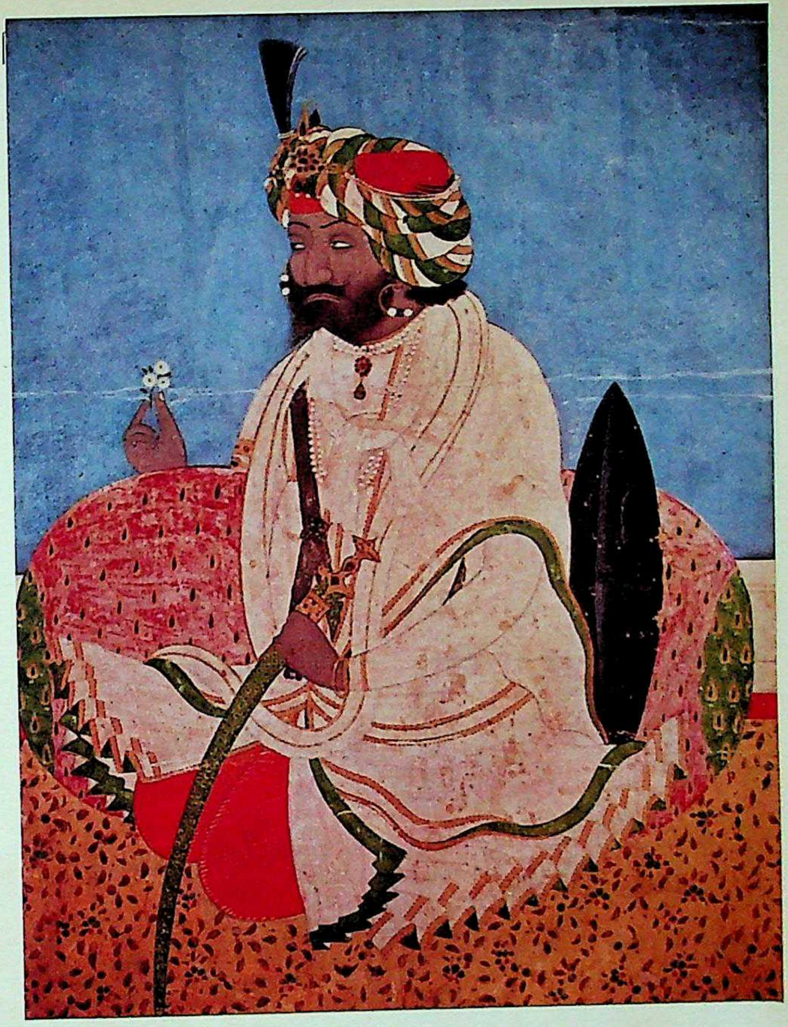


THE DESERTED GIRL WAITING FOR HER LOVER — BASOHLI — CA. 1680 — VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

Two other hill-states, Kulu and Chamba, derived artistic styles from the work of the Basohli artists (plate p. 146). But far the most important group of later hill works was produced in the states of Guler, Kangra, Garhwal and Nurpur. The style, it seems was evolved in Guler, and then transplanted, fully fledged, to the others after 1760. It was probably based on the Basohli style of about 1720; but it is absolutely certain that its development was hastened by the migration to Guler of artists trained in the Delhi manner. For the enamelled suaveness of its textures, its bouquets of trees in landscapes on an "optically correct" scale, can only be interpreted as due to direct influence from the plains. A beautiful and relatively early example of the assimilation of this influence appears in our plate (p. 150). There were portraits made in Guler, and Guler rulers had no less military pride than other Rajputs. But, perhaps owing to feminine patronage—for the palace ladies seem to have spent more time with the palace albums of miniatures than their lords—the Guler style more and more gave itself up to extremes of cool, romantic elegance. Bright colours in its pictures came to be confined to their proper place on textiles and flowers. The rest of the scene was executed with restrained tones. By the 1760s, when it

KRISHNA SWALLOWING THE FOREST FIRE THREATENING HIS PEOPLE — CHAMBA — CA. 1760
VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

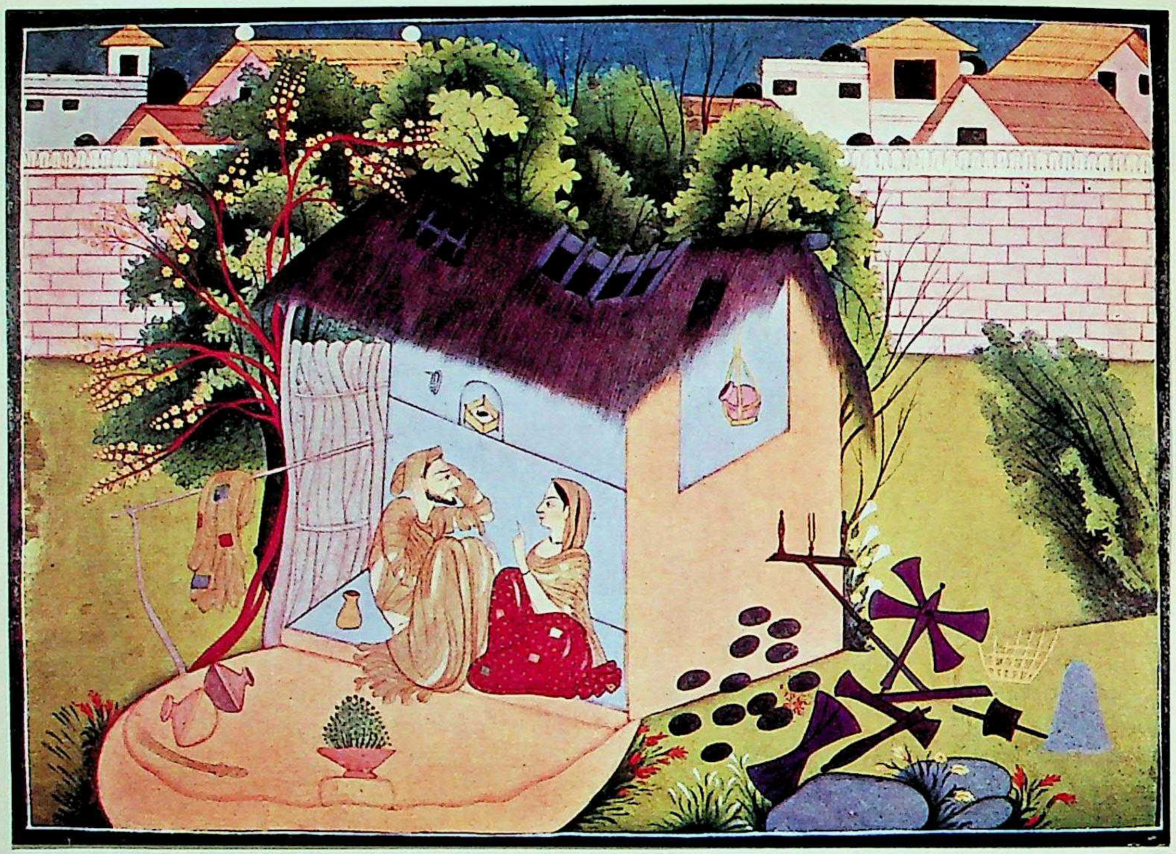




RAJAH GULAB SINGH
OF JAMMU (1820-1857)
VICTORIA AND ALBERT
MUSEUM, LONDON

was carried over two hundred miles of mule-track through forbidding terrain to Garhwal, this style had achieved its ultimate of refinement. Its subjects were by then confined to Hindu romance, the Krishna legend especially, and the ancient epic of the Ramayana to which the Hindi rewriting of Tulsi Das had given a fresh popular currency.

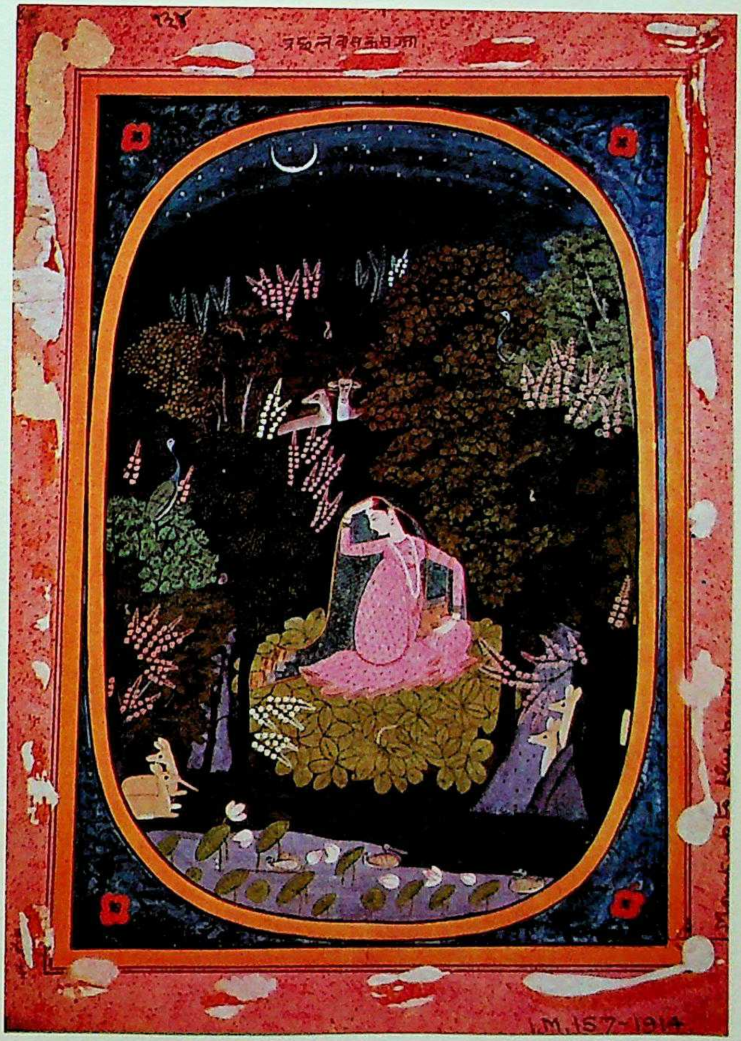
In Garhwal the style flourished exceedingly. Its long, suave, curving lines were adapted to give expressive significance even to the landscape itself. In the



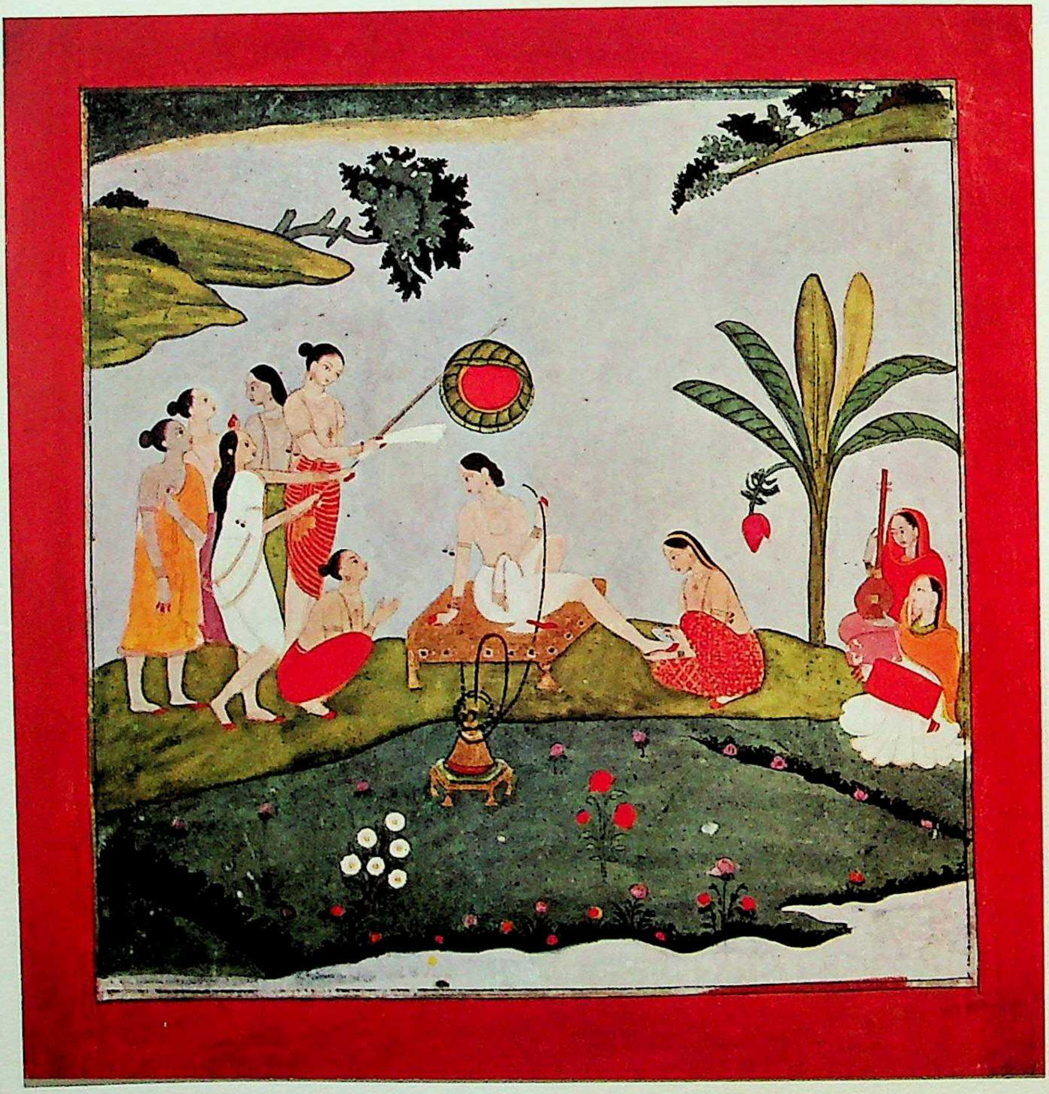
SUDAMA ENCOURAGED BY HIS WIFE — GARHWAL — CA. 1785 — VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

Garhwal painting here reproduced (plate p. 148) the objects symbolical of poverty, the broken basket, the rotting thatch, are not left alone to tell the story. There is a *tendresse* in the execution of the whole picture that expresses the embracing love of the God by whom the Brahmin is soon to be blessed and exalted. Krishna, his old pupil, will listen to him when, ashamed, he does as his wife suggests, "go and beg of Krishna".

About 1775 the Guler style was transplanted to Kangra, and thence to Nurpur in both of which states it took root and flourished into the 1820s. It is virtually impossible to distinguish the styles of these two states. The most striking feature of the last evolution of this tradition is the fantastic efflorescence of the landscape (plate p. 149). Krishna and Radha walk or sit among wooded hills, beside the "Yamuna's sweet waters" and make love among flowers and blossoming trees that are far more than stage-properties. The landscapes are optically "realised" in the western sense more radically than in any other Rajput art. Brindaban here seems less of a fantasy world, more of a natural landscape of spring. It is true that the figures occasionally give the impression of being slightly tired repetitions of often repeated formulae. But the colour schemes, with the characteristic mauve saris among the dense greenery remain very much alive.



GIRL WAITING FOR HER LOVER
KANGRA — CA. 1800
VICTORIA AND ALBERT
MUSEUM, LONDON

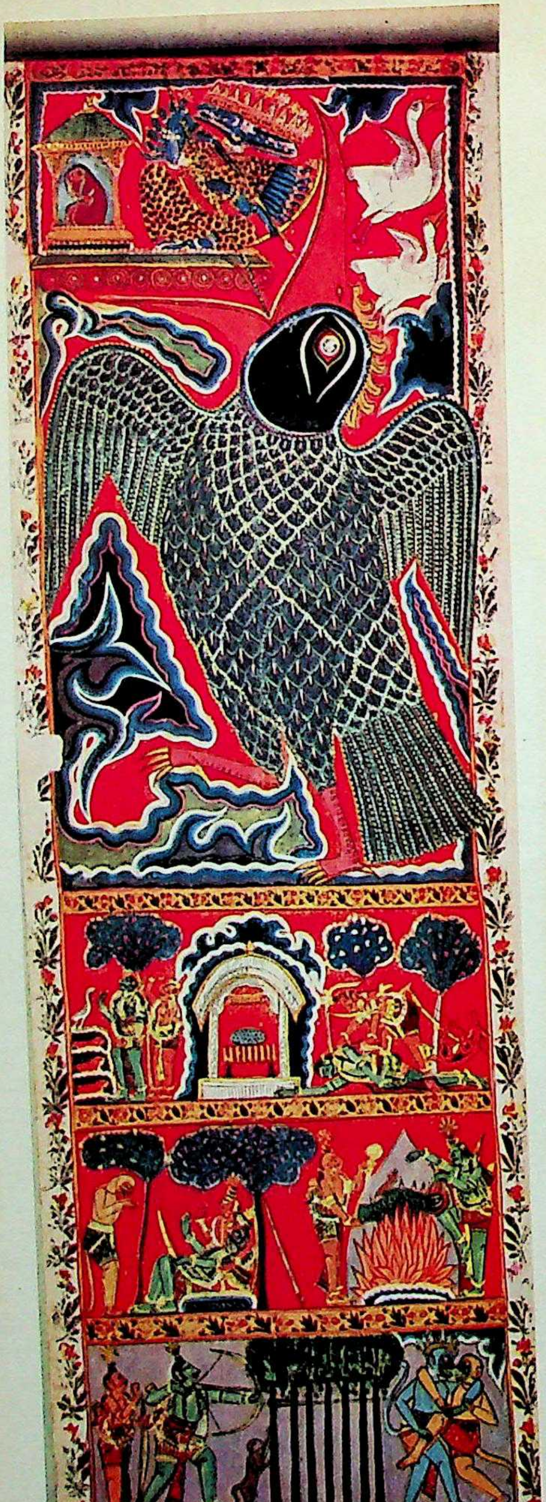


PRINCESS AND HER LADIES BY THE LAKE — GULER — CA. 1755
VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

MODERN SURVIVALS

A number of survivals of ancient styles of painting persisted into the European epoch, especially at the primitive level, away from the influence of western sophistication. Among the aboriginal peoples of remoter regions like the Gonds, Nagas, Khonds, Santals and Oraons there are traditions even now scarcely touched by the modern world. The pictorial art of these people possesses the magical functions of such primitive art the world over, and demands to be discussed in terms different from our present ones. Among the Hindus, however, here and there survived vestiges of old and vigorous pictorial tradition.

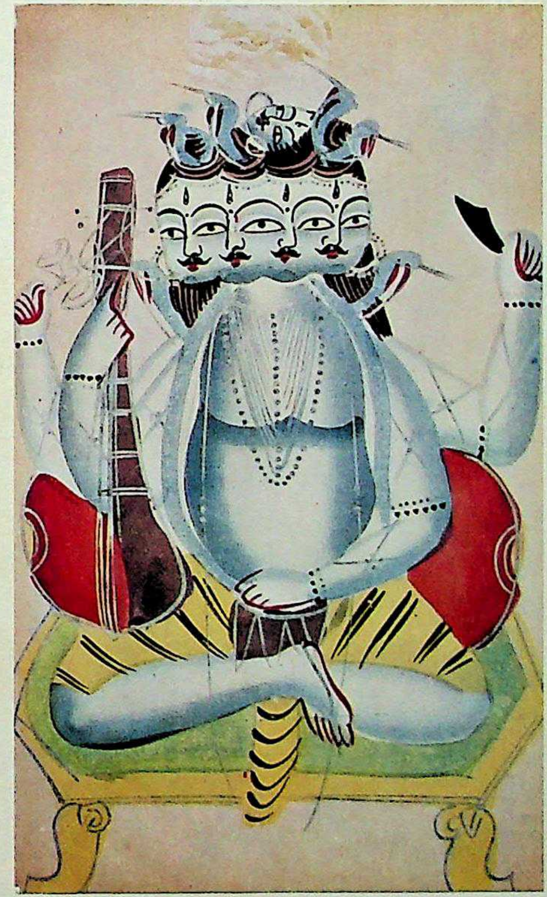
First, and far more important than is normally recognised, are the many small pictures of all kinds made during the 19th century by Indian artists for British people in search of picturesque material for their scrap-books and journals. Often it is true, the style of these works falls into an uncomfortable amalgam of western figure drawing ill-done, and garish Indian colour. But equally often, the artists have preserved much of their own tradition of drawing as well. It is easy to condemn both the British for their lack of artistic awareness and the Indians for their eagerness to abandon their own artistic principles in these works. In fact the artistic results of this kind of patronage were not nearly so bad as they are sometimes said to be. The bazaar artists of the great cities of India painted in body colour innumerable sets of "Indian costumes", "Indian festivals ceremonies", "Indian castes", and "Indian deities", sometimes on paper, but usually on thin transparent sheets of mica. These were used for tracing the designs from a master-set. And naturally such a method of painting did not favour the production of lively or original work; sets where the Indian artists was trying to produce pictures after an alien type are less successful artistically than those made by painters who had no such imitative intention. But the fact that one can recognise the place of origin of many of these sets from their style indicates that they cannot be entirely devoid of genuine artistic expression. Those from Delhi and Lahore, especially the larger paper pictures, often contain strong reminiscences of Rajput styles. Those from Mirzapur are commonly very much westernised. Those from Tanjore have much of the opulence of the late Southern tradition; those from the East are equally distinctive.



THE RAMAYANA ILLUSTRATED
PATUA — W. BENGAL — CA. 1820
VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

True survivals of native traditions of painting during the 19th century appear on wooden book-covers from Bengal, Bihar and Orissa; on sets of circular playing cards painted in lac colour from many parts of India; in sparsely illuminated manuscripts from the Eastern regions. But perhaps the two most artistically successful types are Patua paintings and the Kalighat pictures.

In Bengal there still exist peasant families of professional story tellers, who travel from village to village earning their livelihood by giving public recitations of traditional legends of gods and heroes. They carry with them long painted scrolls which they unroll to illustrate the different episodes of their stories (plate p. 152). These scrolls are family property, and are made by members of the family. The profession is an ancient and honourable one. The Sanskrit grammarian Patanjali



A SYNCRETIC IMAGE OF BRAHMA AND SIVA
KALIGHAT — CA. 1875
BODLEIAN LIBRARY, OXFORD

in the second century B.C. refers to itinerent showmen who preached moral and religious sermons illustrating their talks with illuminated scrolls. People like these must have played an important part in the evolution and diffusion of Indian culture all through the centuries.

The Kalighat pictures are so called because they are associated with the great temple (Ghat) in Calcutta dedicated to the terrible goddess Kali. She often appears in these pictures, black complexioned, grimacing horribly with snarling fangs and a red lolling tongue, garlanded with human heads. Kalighat paintings are usually about 18" × 12" in size, on thin paper or cheap board. They are painted in bright watercolour with passages in body-colour and touches of gold or silver. All through the 19th century they were sold for about a farthing each to pilgrims and visitors to the temple, who hung them up in their homes. Many have religious subjects, and represent Hindu deities (plate p. 153). But many display a lively fancy in their choice of subject, Europeans in hats with umbrellas; Hindus beating their "Westernised" wives; lobsters, cats eating prawns and couples promenading in bullock carts.

The production and sale of these pictures again was a family business. And since they sold so cheaply they had to be made in huge numbers to provide a living. The artists made a virtue out of this necessity, and developed a fascinating broad and abrupt style, full of drastic simplifications, that appeals very much to the modern eye. It has been compared to Léger's. Sweeping areas of colour wash are given whilst still wet rims of darker colour, to produce an effect of modelling. A few contours, features, ornaments, fingers and toes are defined in body colour when the wash is dry. That is all there is to it. But one need hardly say that the Kalighat artists developed an enormous skill, and often displayed considerable expressive power. They found it hard, however, to keep pace with the rising cost of living, and before they succumbed to the competition of cheap oleographs and other prints they were driven to desperate expedients. In their later pictures the simplification became so drastic that there was little scope left for art.

I must express my great gratitude to the people and institutions who have allowed us to use illustrations of objects in their possession. The owners of individual pieces are acknowledged in the captions of each plate. I should however like to express particular thanks to Sri Gopi Krishna Kanoria of Calcutta for allowing us to use several paintings from his most distinguished collection, and to Mulk Raj Anand for his ready help.

My thanks are also due to Mesdames Odette Viennot and Ina Bandy, Messieurs David de Harport (Unesco Expert) and Vitold de Golish fort heir remarkable photographic reproductions of wall paintings in India and Ceylon.

It is a matter for great regret that repeated requests for pictures from Indian official sources were unavailing.

ANALYTICAL TABLE OF PLATES

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